

# "ON THE FIRING LINE WITH THE GERMANS"

(USA, 1915)

## FILM ANNOTATIONS



Wilbur H. Durborough crossing the border into Germany, April 1915. Library of Congress, Bain Collection, P&P Division, Washington, D.C.

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## About the Authors



Ron van Dopperen (left) studied history at the University of Utrecht (Holland) where he wrote his Master of Arts Thesis on the American World War I documentary films (1988). He now works as a communication advisor for the Dutch government. Cooper C. Graham (middle) is retired from the Library of Congress where he was a curator in the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division. He is the author of numerous articles as well as Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* and (in collaboration) *D.W. Griffith and the Biograph Company*. James W. Castellan (right) is an independent scholar researching a biography of Oswald F. Schuette and articles about some historically significant individuals with whom Schuette associated, including Wilbur H. Durborough. Castellan, a graduate of Brown University with an M.S. from the University in Pennsylvania, retired from a pharmaceutical company in 2001.

Castellan, van Dopperen and Graham co-authored *American Cinematographers in the Great War* in 2014 which was published by John Libbey and sponsored by the Pordenone Silent Film Festival. The reconstruction of Durborough's film *On the Firing Line with the Germans* by the Library of Congress is based on their research. In October 2015, this film was publically shown for the first time since March 1917 at Pordenone, Italy.

For more information visit the authors' weblog <http://shootingthegreatwar.blogspot.nl>

## How It Happened

On 25 March 1915, two Americans, Wilbur Henry Durborough and his assistant and cinematographer, Irving Guy Ries, sailed on the *Nieuw Amsterdam* from New York to Rotterdam. Their assignment was the exciting challenge to capture in photographs and on film German life and the German Army during World War I. They were carrying various cameras for still photography as well as two Universal cameras for moving picture film. They were also well armed with visas and various official documents, including letters from Johann Heinrich Count von Bernstorff, the German Ambassador to the United States, and Bernhard Jakob Ludwig Dernburg, nominally in the United States as a representative of the German Red Cross, but who was the *de facto* head of German propaganda in the United States.

Durborough was born on 11 October 1882 in Rising Sun, Kent County, Delaware. After trying several different occupations, he turned his photography hobby into his profession when he was hired by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1909. In 1911 Hearst's *Chicago Examiner* hired him and in 1912 he left to become an independent photojournalist in time to cover all three political conventions that summer: Republican, Democratic, and Bull Moose. In 1913 he contracted as a photographer for the Newspaper Enterprise Association and it was at the NEA that he really hit his stride.

In late 1914 NEA Editor Sam Hughes asked Durborough to go to Germany to cover the war. He leapt at the opportunity, proposing he also make a film about his trip as well as his usual still photography. Hughes turned down his film proposal but agreed he could



**Figure 1. Wilbur H. Durborough, April 1915.**  
Photo copyrighted by the Newspaper  
Enterprise Association.

pursue the film project on his own as long as he fulfilled his usual still photography for the NEA. He proposed the film project to a group of Chicago businessmen who saw the business opportunity of showing the war to Americans first hand and formed the War Film Syndicate. Durborough was not a cinematographer, so he needed one and the Syndicate selected Irving Guy Ries. Durborough wanted to hire Nicholas MacDonald, a fellow photographer he had worked with at the *Chicago Examiner*, but the Syndicate felt MacDonald did not have enough experience, while Ries was a proven movie cameraman, having worked for the Industrial Film Company for a year and a half, who also spoke fluent German.

Germany approved Durborough's trip, and others like it, for several reasons. While Germany may have been doing reasonably well militarily in 1915, it was losing the propaganda war in the United States. It felt, not without reason, that French and British propaganda dominated the media, especially on the Anglophile East Coast, and the cosmopolitan West Coast as well. The only cable to get news from Germany to the United States was via London and from early in the war the British censored all news out of Germany. So America tended to hear only the Entente side of the story. The Germans were highly motivated to share their side of the war with the American public.

The investors in Chicago had many reasons to invest in the trip as well. In the American mid-west a vein of anti-war sentiment ran deep, partially because of the pacifism of the Progressive movement leaders, such as Senators Robert La Follette and George Norris, as well as the Progressive aversion for the autocratic government of the Czar. In addition, there were many German and Irish immigrants in the cities of the mid-west, especially Chicago. In some cases, German-Americans were pro-German even to the point of going to serve in the German Army. Most were not interested in fighting for Germany, but were against America entering the war on the side of Britain, Russia and France. The Irish were strongly anti-British and the Irish Mayor of Chicago, Big Bill Thompson, wanted to "punch King George in the snoot". At first he even refused to greet French Prime Minister Viviani and General Joffre when they visited Chicago in 1917. Many of the Scandinavians in the central and upper mid-west were also lukewarm about involvement in a European war.

So it was natural that Chicago became a center of pro-German sentiment. The *Chicago Tribune* was pro-German and the *Chicago Daily News*, if not pro-German, was careful in presenting the German side in every argument. Oswald F. Schuette, Berlin correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News* who appears in Durborough's film, was a passionate Germanophile. James O'Donnell Bennett, correspondent for the

*Tribune*, who also appears in the film, admitted to being pro-German and was an early voice decrying British propaganda about German atrocities. He was joined in his denial of German atrocities by John McCutcheon, also of the *Tribune*, and by Harry Hansen of the *Chicago Daily News*. The *Irish Voice* reported on 4 March 1915 that virtually all Irish American leaders in Chicago endorsed the refusal of aid to Britain, even though they might sympathize with France and Belgium.

Ambassador Count Bernstorff and propaganda chief Dernburg thought it would be good to have Americans correspondents cover the war from the German side. This was also true for American cinematographers. The Germans had financed the American Correspondent Film Company and distributed *Messter-Woche*, the German newsreel, as well as some military documentary films, but Dernburg felt that the films were so heavy-handed that they would never appeal to the American audience, and so saw advantages to sending American filmmakers to Germany to cover the war. Edwin F. Weigle of the *Chicago Tribune* got permission to photograph the war in Germany, covered the fall of Antwerp, and filmed *The German Side of the War*. Donald Thompson photographed in Germany as well. So Durborough and Ries were in good company, and also had the enthusiastic support of at least the German Foreign Office and the German Ambassador for their venture.

The submarine issue was already enough of a problem that Durborough and Ries had only one choice, a neutral Dutch line, for traveling to Europe. After they arrived at Rotterdam and cleared the Dutch-German frontier, they proceeded to Berlin and settled into the Hotel Adlon. At first they had delays in filming and getting photographs for the Newspaper Enterprise Association because Durborough had no military pass for his automobile and could not travel freely. Like other American newsmen he did not risk mailing material via London instead sending his photos and correspondence via Scandinavian ships which also were subject to possible British interdiction. These photographs began to appear in the newspapers by late June, most notably in the *Cleveland Press*, the Scripps flagship newspaper, and even a few in the *New York Times*.





**Figure 2. American reporters at the Adlon Hotel. From left to right, Cyril Brown (*New York Times*), T.K. Meloy (*Chicago Daily News*), H.J. Reilly (*Chicago Tribune*), Oswald Schuette (*Chicago Daily News*), Wilbur H. Durborough (NEA), Dr. Lewis H. Marks, S.B. Conger (Associated Press), S.M. Bouton (Associated Press), Carl Ackerman (United Press), Karl H. von Wiegand, (*New York World*). The same scene was filmed by Irving Guy Ries and appears in Durborough's film. Photo courtesy of Richard Francis Schuette. Identifications from *Editor and Publisher*, 24 July 1915. This photo was taken in June 1915 before Durborough and Ries left for East Prussia.**

It was in Berlin that Durborough met most of the foreign correspondents who were reporting the war to America from Germany. H. L. Mencken did not travel to Germany until 1917, shortly before America entered the war, but the cast of characters had not altered much, and Mencken, as was his custom, described them frankly, if not brutally:

They were, in the main, an indifferent lot, and I was somewhat upset by my first contact with the unhappy fact that American newspapers are sometimes represented abroad by men who would hardly qualify as competent police reporters at home. Of those that I recall, the best was James O'Donnell Bennett, of the *Chicago Tribune*. He held himself aloof from the rest, and seldom joined in their continuous boozing in the bar of the Adlon Hotel. Others were Oswald F. Schütte, of the *Chicago Daily News*; Raymond Swing, who was also with the *Daily News*; William Bayard Hale, who represented Hearst; Seymour Conger, head of the Associated Press Bureau; Carl W. Ackerman, head of the United Press Bureau; Guido Enderes and Philip Powers, both of the Associated Press; Oscar King Davis, and Cyril Brown both of the *New York Times*. There were yet others, but I forget them.<sup>1</sup>

The *Chicago Daily News* and its Berlin correspondent Oswald F. Schuette clearly were associated with the Durborough film project. The owner and editor of the paper, Victor F. Lawson, subscribed with the War Film Syndicate for rights to presenting the film's initial three weeks in Chicago. He viewed it as an image building effort and pledged all proceeds from this and his paper's simultaneous presentation in another theater of balancing a French archive war film to the Red Cross. It's very possible Lawson was approached by the local War Film Syndicate before Durborough left Chicago. If not, he certainly learned of the opportunity during Schuette's brief trip back to the States in July 1915. Lawson also acquired state's rights for several Midwest states where this film was advertised as made "in conjunction with Oswald F. Schuette, *Chicago Daily News* Correspondent". The film has four scenes with Schuette, two with intertitles identifying him by name including one with him helping to repair Durborough's Stutz: "The American camp. Mr. Schuette of the *Chicago Daily News*, is some mechanic as well as one of the best newspapermen I have ever met."

While Schuette certainly was part of the group that Germany allowed to go to the eastern front along with Durborough, and while he sent dispatches to the *Daily News* on a regular basis, he never mentioned Durborough by name in any of them. However Schuette was well regarded by the German authorities and in a few cases he successfully interceded behind the scenes on behalf of other Americans in Berlin for permissions or accesses initially denied them by persuasively explaining the German self-interest in doing so. Durborough, who was quoted upon returning as saying "[Schuette's] friendship was valuable to me in my task of getting real war pictures" <sup>2</sup>, appears to have benefited from his help because he was able to photograph a number of human interest stories in Berlin, in spite of the ban on shooting on the streets of Berlin without police permission. In fact, it is a disguised godsend for Durborough that at the time, there was a discussion, or rather a feud, between the German Foreign Office and the German Army. While the Foreign Office was extremely interested in inviting neutral observers and journalists, such as Durborough and Schuette, to view and report on Germany at war, the German Army was not. As far as the Army was concerned the press, and especially the foreign press, photographers and cinematographers both, were a nuisance and probably a pack of spies. The result was that it was extremely difficult for the photographers and journalists to get a pass to visit any military front whatsoever, and so they spent a lot of time at the Adlon bar and tea rooms, cooling their heels. In addition there was even a ban on photographing in the streets of Berlin without the express permission of the Police Commissioner, which Durborough seemed to evade totally. They all complained, but

because of this confinement in Berlin, Durborough had the time to compile a wonderful record of the city in this second summer of the war, an effort that may have been aided by Schuette.

One of the earliest references that we found in official German documents to Durborough and Ries was in a report by the Foreign Office dated 5 May 1915. It describes a trip arranged for neutral foreign correspondents to a number of industrial cities in the Ruhr area. On this occasion Durborough and Ries were also accompanied by Albert K. Dawson, a fellow photo-journalist who worked for the American Correspondent Film Company. On 26 April 1915, they were near Hannover at a training ground where they witnessed a massive military exercise at the Vahrenwalder Heide, which was covered with their cameras. The report noted: "The General Command of the 10th Army Corps for this visit had assembled a large military force from the city of Hannover and surroundings and had done this in a way that wasn't noticed. The combined field exercises of the infantry, cavalry, artillery and a large number of airplanes made for a picturesque military sight. A series of photographic and cinematographic recordings of this event was made." <sup>3</sup>



**Figure 3.** Photograph by Durborough of German troops charging across an open field. The scene was probably taken at a training ground, perhaps near the Vahrenwalder Heide around Hannover in April 1915. Copied from the *New York Times*, 4 July 1915

In May, Durborough and Ries filmed the notable Chicagoan Jane Addams along with Aletta Jacobs and Alice Hamilton, who were in Berlin as part of the Women's Peace Movement. The three women had been traveling to all the belligerents in Europe, trying in vain to persuade the responsible leaders in the



various warring countries to make peace. The delegation met with Foreign Minister Gottlieb E. G. von Jagow in Berlin on 21 May, and Reich Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg the following day. Later, Victor Fremont Lawson, the editor of the *Chicago Daily News*, said that when Jane Addams and her associates were in Berlin to present the Women's Peace Conference resolutions it was Oswald Schuette who obtained an interview for them with von Bethmann-Hollweg – which may explain how Durborough knew where to get motion pictures of the ladies.



**Figure 4.** Jane Addams, visiting Berlin for the Women's Peace Movement, filmed by Durborough in May 1915. With Alice Hamilton (center), first woman on the medical faculty of Harvard, and Aletta Jacobs (right), Dutch pacifist, suffragist and the first woman to be admitted to the faculty of medicine in the Netherlands. This and other frame enlargements in this annotation were taken by George Willeman of the Library of Congress.

Morale was still high, there was still horse racing in Germany, and the civilians put on a bold front everywhere, but as some of Durborough's photography shows, Berlin was beginning to feel the dark

side of the war. He photographed the “Wailing Wall,” where the casualty lists were posted, the *Kriegsblindenheim* of Frau von Ihne, and the visit of Empress Augusta to the hospital in Berlin. He photographed the wounded in the clinics, and a man who died twenty minutes after he was filmed. He photographed women working cheerfully in victory gardens, suggesting that while food might still be as plentiful as the authorities suggested, they were also aware that there might soon be a pinch. He filmed and photographed Red Cross dogs at work helping the wounded. Again cheerful enough, and everyone likes dogs, and the film obviously is shot in training, but again, a hint of the reality.



**Figure 5.** Princess Marie Antoinette von Ihne at one of her weekly garden parties for wounded veterans. One of Durborough's “human interest” subjects.

Seen here is Her Excellency Princess Marie Antoinette von Ihne who founded the *Kriegsblindenheim* in Berlin, giving a tea for blind and wounded German soldiers. Frau von Ihne was the wife of the famous architect Ernst von Ihne, who designed many buildings for the Kaiser. Her Home for the Blind, located at

12 Bellevue Strasse, was mentioned favorably both by the Americans George Brinton McClellan, a professor of economics at Princeton and son of the Civil War general, who was former mayor of New York City and a decidedly pro-German writer, and by James W. Gerard, the American Ambassador to Germany, who was not.

Durborough and Ries also filmed at the Döberitz German prisoner of war camp and perhaps the one at Zossen. Joseph Danziger of the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* (see below) also filed a story on Döberitz, but it is not clear whether he and Durborough were on the same tour. Trips to prison camps were one of the safest and easiest trips for all concerned. Since the Germans were anxious to show how well they were treating the prisoners, the army was always taking correspondents and photographers to them. Durborough also filmed the already-mentioned Ambassador James W. Gerard.

## East Prussia

Finally, between 10 and 22 June 1915, the Germans arranged a trip for Durborough, Ries and many other correspondents to see the results of the fighting and destruction in East Prussia. Most western histories have failed to deal adequately with the Russian invasion in East Prussia in the autumn of 1914, or realized what a traumatic experience it was for the Germans. The Russians actually invaded twice, first in August 1914, and then again in November 1914.

Late in 1914, Hindenburg and his chief of staff, Ludendorff, had won a stunning victory over the Russian forces at Tannenberg, virtually destroying the Russian Second Army and taking 90,000 prisoners. In February 1915, at the first and second battles of the Masurian Lakes, they managed to split the Russian forces and drive them totally out of East Prussia. Once the Germans had ousted the Russians from East Prussia, they had a chance to see what the Russians had done to this land:

The ordeals of the Central Powers' peoples in the eastern invasions at the beginning of the First World War are today forgotten, obliterated by memories of the far greater horrors perpetrated on the same lands in the mid-twentieth century. Yet at the time, the invasions were recognized as a defining experience; no other event did more to shape central Europeans' understanding of what was at stake in this war, or the ability of their states to fight it. The shock of invasion reverberated far beyond



the battlefield. News of the Russian attack and atrocities in East Prussia horrified and mobilized the population of the whole Reich.<sup>4</sup>

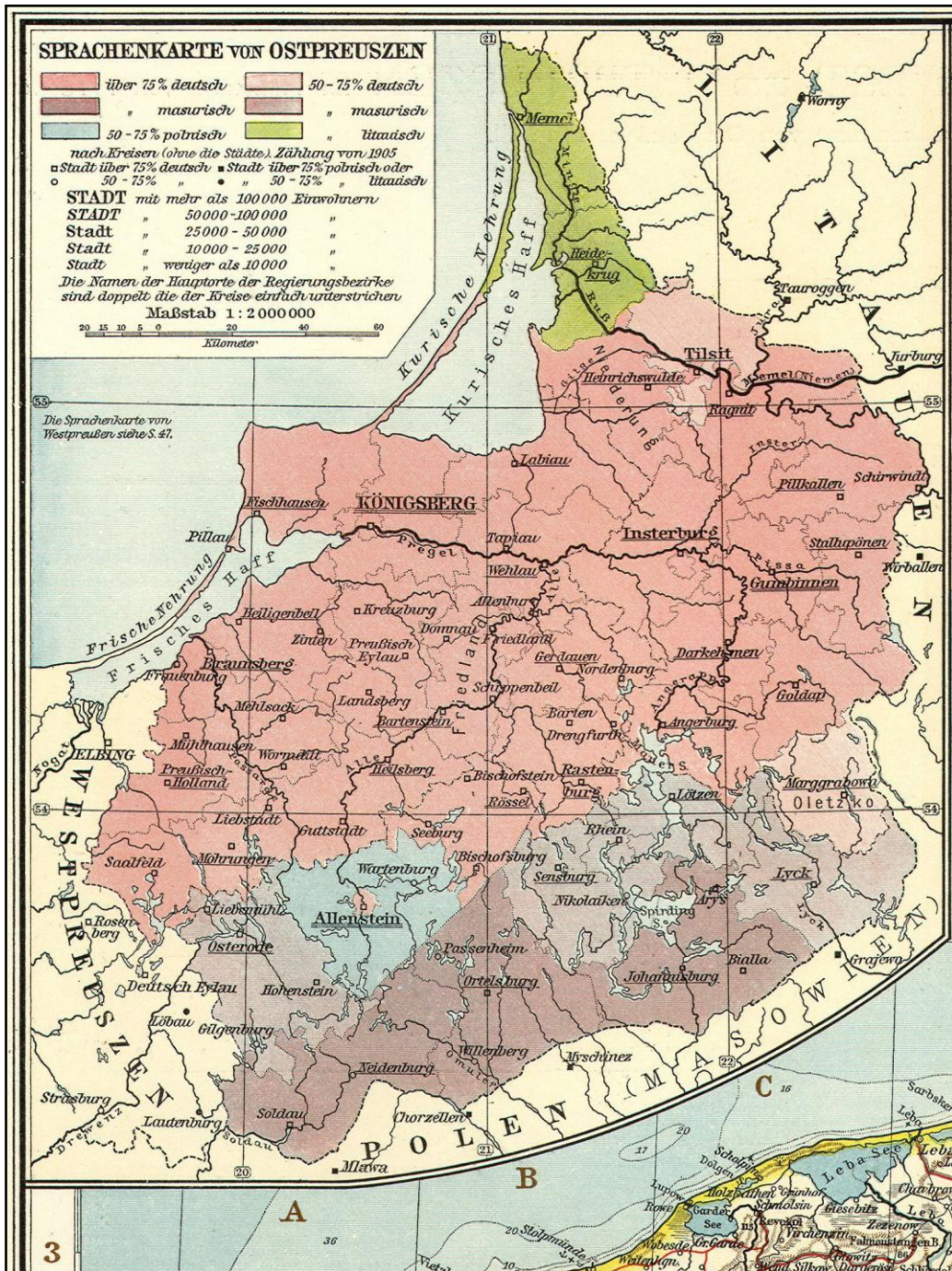


Figure 6. The former East Prussia.

While the cities had come through relatively unscarred, three-fifths of its small towns and a quarter of its villages and farms had been destroyed. About 1500 East Prussians were killed by the Russians, some in reprisals, some executed, others killed as a result of plundering or panic. It was similar in many ways to the atrocities in Belgium committed by the Germans, but unlike Belgium, the atrocities did not quickly abate. In fact, they became worse, in part because of a deliberate Russian policy of singling out East Prussians as an element hostile to the Russians to be treated brutally.

It was not ethnic cleansing, but it was a step in that direction. The Russian General Rennenkampf ordered that places which carried out even the least attack on the Russian army would be burned to the ground. Rape, looting and mass deportations were common. Many East Prussians were sent to the Volga or the Urals, where they were ill-treated and a third of them died. Because of the invasions, a million refugees left East Prussia and went to Germany. Their tales of the atrocities there brought all Germans together, whether socialist or nationalist, and this powerful solidarity of the Germans was to remain for much of the duration of the war.

There had been a previous trip for neutral correspondents to East Prussia in the spring of 1915. The first visit dwelt upon the horrors of the Russian invasion. Judging from what the correspondents wrote, the Germans probably agreed to organize another trip to East Prussia to show the foreign correspondents the destruction caused by the Russians there before they were ousted, as well as the results of the remarkable victories of the Germans at Tannenberg and at the Masurian Lakes, but perhaps as well to show how things had improved there since February 1915. There seem to be a determinedly upbeat note in the writings of Arthur G. Abrecht, the correspondent from the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, with the continual emphasis on the message "East Prussia will rise again, far greater than before," and of course the war was going relatively well there. If there was a bright spot for German fortunes in 1915, the Eastern Front was it. Hence the trip to East Prussia. Fortunately for us, the Foreign Office filed a complete report, listing all the correspondents and all the places they visited (See Appendix).



# Durborough With BIG GERMAN DRIVE AT RUSSIA!



Heavy line shows route taken by Staff Photographer Durborough in his latest camera campaign in the eastern war zone.

Staff Photographer W. H. Durborough, who went to Germany in the spring to take pictures for this newspaper, **IS WITH THE GERMANS IN THEIR GREAT DRIVE** against Russia from East Prussia.

A batch of films has just arrived from him, showing scenes behind the firing line of Gen. von Hindenburg and of Gen. von Buelow, who is pushing down into Russia with the greatest army of cavalry ever gotten together. Durborough's journey by automobile started at Posen in Germany and his motor carried him northeasterly through East Prussia to Königsberg, through the famous Manzurian Lakes district and down into Russia itself.

The Beacon will print Durborough's most interesting pictures from day to day.

Figure 7. *Wichita Beacon*, 8 August 1915. While the map shows the East Prussian trip, it had ended in July. By 8 August 1915, Durborough had already been in Warsaw, which had already fallen and Novo Georgievsk, soon to surrender, is not even on the map.

Dutch reporter Annie Lehr de Waal noted:

"At the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to a number of neutral journalists, this well-prepared trip to East-Prussia and some fortified towns such as Thorn and Posen, was received with great satisfaction. Director Schumacher, the well-known chairman of the federation of German tourist agencies, as well as our military escort, took good care of us. And this really wasn't an easy job with such a mixed, international company, including some photographers and film operators. America and Scandinavia was represented, as well as the Balkans by a Greek and a Rumanian. But the German talent for organization ruled supreme and made sure that even the slightest difficulty was solved, so everyone had a feeling that this trip met their personal expectations and wishes, which is in a way the biggest compliment one can make." <sup>5</sup>

The correspondents traveled to the major German cities of Marienburg, Königsberg, Insterburg, Allenstein, Osterode, Thorn and Posen. Russian towns and areas of battle visited included Gumbinnen, Oilkellen, Schirwindt, Wladislawow, Wilkowyezki, Wirballen, Kybartai, Eydkuhnen, Stallupönen, Darkehmen, Goldap, Rominten, Marggrabowa, Lötzen, Rastenburg, Senzburg, Nicolaiken, Johhannisburg, Sorquitten-Mirbach, Bischofsburg, Ortelsburg, Huhenstei, the battlefield of Tannenberg, Neidenburg and Soldau. Many of the places were captured by the Germans during the Second Battle of the Masurian Lakes in February 1915. According to Josef Schumacher of the Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, (Germany's Foreign Propaganda Agency), the trip lasted from 10 June until 22 June 1915.<sup>6</sup>

The various correspondents wrote up their experiences on the East Prussian trip in their newspapers. There is an unfortunate ethnic bias that seems distressing in this politically correct age one hundred years later, but all of the correspondents both from the Netherlands and the United States clearly expressed their belief that the Germans were superior to the Poles. The German feelings of superiority is not new, hence the much-used expression *Polnische Wirtschaft*, and clearly the correspondents felt this way about the Russians and Slavs in general. While these sentiments sometimes make the modern reader wince, the reports are valuable as a first hand report of what happened there, and the attitudes of the correspondents are part of the history. So the modern reader is advised to take a deep breath when reading some of these reports.

Many of their stories are still cited in histories of the period. One of the most useful series of articles is by Annie Lehr de Waal, published in the Catholic Rotterdam newspaper *Maasbode*, because she is the

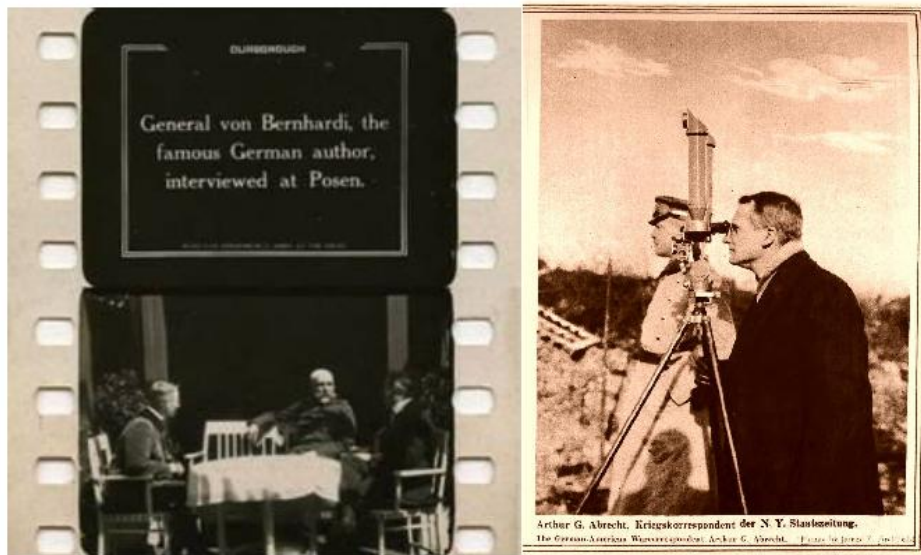
only one of all the correspondents researched who gave a methodical report of the activities of the correspondents and photographers on each day.

Her first report, "A Trip through East-Prussia", published in the *Maasbode* on 14 July 1915, dated Berlin, 10 July 1915, opens with a poetic description of the old town hall at Posen (Posnan in Polish) and the German past when the Slavic people to the east were colonized. As a result, the author says, "German culture in this magnificent city now flourishes."<sup>7</sup> This jibes with Durborough's statement that the trip started in Posen. Actually, Posen on the river Warta and Thorn (Torun) on the river Vistula were never part of East Prussia, but were historically cities in Poland that had come under Prussian domination after the Napoleonic Wars, and then became part of Germany's West Prussia after the unification of Germany in 1870. They were included in the trip probably because the Prussian Railway line ran through this city, but also because they were on the border with Poland. Posen, a fortified military area, was only fifty-five kilometers from the Polish border and in August 1914 believed itself in danger of being besieged by the Russians.

While in Posen, Durborough apparently availed himself of the services of Arthur G. Abrecht. Abrecht, the able correspondent for the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, was on the trip. Abrecht wrote reports and took a number of photographs during this trip which appeared in the August 1915 *Kriegs-Album*, published by the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*. Durborough did not speak a word of German, and he seemed to have developed the habit of asking Abrecht to translate for him when it was necessary.

On this occasion, Durborough had himself filmed with Friedrich von Bernhardi at his headquarters in Posen, and supposedly interviewed him. Bernhardi was a Pan-German nationalist and had become famous, or infamous, for his book *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg*, in which he made a strong case, based on Neo-Darwinist ideas, for the necessity of war and the total disregard of treaties. He advocated unlimited, ruthless aggression against Germany's neighbors. Bernhardi may have agreed to talk to Durborough because he had published another book that year, *Germany and England*, which was full of anti-British propaganda and mentioned the possibility of a German-American and Irish-American political alliance against England. According to a statement he made after the war, he fully expected the United States to enter the war on Germany's side and was quite irritated when it did not.

In the scene, Durborough appears on screen right, General von Bernhardi in the center, and someone with a marked likeness to Abrecht on the left, talking to Bernhardi. There is no written proof that Abrecht acted as the translator in this filmed interview, but that is a strong possibility.



**Figure 8. Abrecht, Bernhardi and Durborough.** The picture of Abrecht on right is taken from the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung Kriegs-Album*, 1 May 1915

Although arrangements for the sightseeing tour were personally arranged by Mayor Dr. Arnold Hasse, there is very little in the film, or indeed in the comments of the correspondents, about Thorn. Durborough filmed some Red Cross boats on the Vistula, and soldiers at the Thorn train station getting refreshments from a Red Cross canteen run by ladies of the *Vaterlandischer Frauen-Verein*, followed by shots of soldiers boarding a train. He may have gotten shots at the Thorn station while his party was waiting for a train. Only in retrospect does one realize that many of these soldiers were headed for the July offensive against Warsaw, since Thorn was a great jumping-off point for that sector.



Very little film was shot in Königsberg, the capitol of East Prussia, probably because there was very little to comment upon or to photograph. The Russians never invaded the city, so it was clean, prosperous and probably uninspiring. The journalists visited the public parks with Oberbürgermeister Dr. Siegfried Körte. According to Lehr de Waal, the city had modern spacious schools, labor shops and houses and soldiers marching everywhere. But they met one interesting individual who was perhaps far more significant than the usual generals and politicians. Lehr de Waal reported:

"In one of the military buildings that we entered, we met Professor Hoefmann who has done an excellent job in designing and constructing artificial limbs. Who can say who has benefited more? Is it the man who - despite the loss of both of his arms - now can use a hammer and a saw? Or is it the captain who had lost his left leg and after six weeks was ready again to ride a horse and re-enter military service?"<sup>8</sup>



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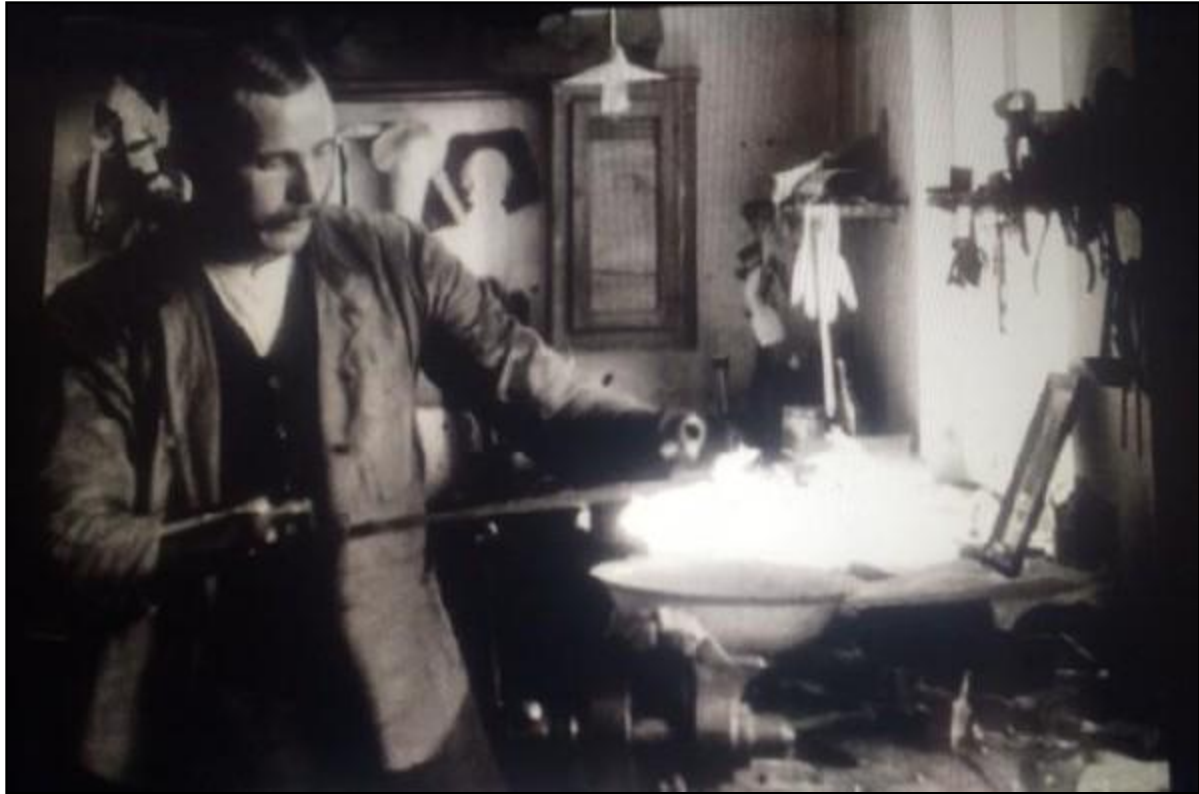
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Figure 9. According to Dr. Josef Schumacher, a number of photographs taken by the correspondents on the trip to East Prussia were reproduced in *Der Grosse Krieg in Bildern*. There were indeed a number of pictures, but unfortunately, there were no photo credits accompanying them, so most cannot be attributed to Durborough, Ries, or anyone else. However, this shot to the right of the handicapped locksmith, a patient of Dr. Heinrich Hoefmann, is a near duplication of a shot in Durborough's film. *Der grosse Krieg in Bildern*, no. 7, p.33





Figure 10. Professor Hoeftmann's patient, a locksmith, using a hammer and a saw. From an article by Dr. Alfred Gradenwitz, "Educating Invalid Soldiers", *Scientific American*, Vol. 113, 11 September 1915, 229. Original caption: "A man fitted with four artificial limbs, working at the anvil and drill."



**Figure 11. Frame enlargement from the Durborough film. Intertitle: "Soldier who has lost both hands now able to do many things with artificial devices."**

Professor Heinrich Hoefftmann was one of the world's most famous doctors who worked with artificial limbs. He started his practice in Königsberg in 1880 but became more interested in social medicine than orthopedics, and in 1911 opened the *Krüppel-Heil-und-Lehranstalt für Ostpreussen zu Königsberg*. In accordance with the new accident insurance laws he opened the Welfare Organization for Cripples to rehabilitate the victims. During the First World War, he advised the I. Armeekorps (Prussia), whose headquarters was in Königsberg. Since the military representing the I. Armeekorps was involved in the planning for Königsberg, no doubt it had something to do with the appearance of Dr. Hoefftmann's clinic.

It is possible that Durborough did not take the above photograph – there were other photographers along on the trip – but it is almost certain that it was taken at the same photo and film session arranged for correspondents at which Durborough filmed the scene. The subject is the same identically dressed man and the studio, including the hanging lamp and the furniture in the background, is the same.

Durborough took this film footage, shot at Königsberg in June 1915, and inserted it after the film of the Viktoria Luise Hospital in Berlin, presumably to group the medical scenes of the film together.

In the second report, "A Trip through East Prussia-At Königsberg and Insterberg," Lehr de Waal mentioned the correspondents met East-Prussia's President von Batocki, a "very capable and high qualified man". Born in this part of the country, he was a "real Prussian with strong roots to this area". Some figures presented to Lehr de Waal by the Germans: over 5000 women and children from the poor border districts of East-Prussia were deported to the interior of Russia when the country was invaded. "Why no one knows." <sup>9</sup>

Russian behavior during this war, Lehr de Waal stated, had been very erratic and unpredictable. This, as well as all the damage, dirt and garbage they left behind after their retreat, served as a permanent reminder of the Russian invasion. About 20% of the local population had fled before the invading Russians. As a typical example of their conduct, Lehr de Waal was shown some Russian files that were found at Insterburg, containing a collection of local military orders. Insterburg was the starting point for the correspondents' four-day trip through the country. The authorities supplied them with seven fast cars "so we could see many interesting sights and much more compared to when we would have used a train." <sup>10</sup> This suggests that Durborough did not have his trusty Stutz on this trip. Lehr de Waal described the market at Insterburg where the reporters started on their first trip. Local people joked and said they were selling dog meat because of the ridiculous stories that were circulated in the foreign press about starving Prussians.

Lehr de Waal saw her first burnt houses near Gumbinnen, on the way to Pilkallen. She was told that Pilkallen was attacked twice resulting in 500 dead civilians (including 192 women) and 98 people from the town being deported to Russia. Durborough did not film much in Pilkallen, but what he (or Ries) filmed in panning a column of horses hauling supply wagons through the deserted main street of the town captured in the background the remarkable destruction accomplished by the Russians.

Lehr de Waal's third report covered their tour of Schirwindt, Kybertai, Wirballen and Eydtkuhnen, and back in Germany, ending with a trip to Stallupönen and back to Insterburg – a full day indeed.<sup>11</sup> The

report opened with a description of their trip to Schirwindt, with its graves alongside the road, trenches and road blocks everywhere.

Schirwindt, near the Russian border, was a ghost town where only one house remained standing. Marcus van Blankenstein, the other correspondent from the Netherlands representing the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, described the desolation of East Prussia after the Russian invasion:

From Pilkallen, we drove to the dead city of Schirwindt. There we witnessed the horrible things in this awful wasteland. To the south, in the much bigger city of Ortelsburg, there is even more destruction but Schirwindt is completely dead, an absolute ghost town. At one time, it was a modern city with large and well-constructed houses. In the town square, we saw the ruins of what used to be a large hotel, with several relics of parts of the central heating system. That's the way people used to live in this city that once had 1500 inhabitants.

Of all houses only one is left standing – one of the oldest and most simple constructions. Apart from that, everything has been burned and destroyed. The church building has also been damaged heavily by shrapnel and shells. The Russians used that church as a hospital, and after their retreat only a few people went back and entered the city, and those who dared did not enter that holy place. When someone finally got into the church, the remains of a group of dead Russian soldiers were found. The poor devils were probably left behind by their comrades and must have suffered terribly. Even now, no one thinks about entering this city of the dead and explore these ruins. Two guards patrol the streets, but why should they do this? What mischief could anyone do at such a devastated place? Around the church is a park that has a military monument. The Germans buried their dead soldiers at this place. They are all junior officers that have found their final resting place here. Despite of all the desolation all around, flowers have been left behind on their graves.<sup>12</sup>

Again at Schirwindt, possibly because Durborough spoke no German, he seems to have gone to Arthur G. Abrecht for help, and maybe inspiration. For a while during the trip, Durborough and Abrecht seemed to have developed a symbiosis and what Abrecht described, Durborough filmed. It would have been interesting if Abrecht could have written the intertitles for Durborough's film. For instance, Abrecht had an inclination to find things that he saw during the trip as symbols of East Prussia's rebirth. On Schirwindt:

And something else that has become for me a symbol of East Prussia. That is the sight of the city of Schirwindt. There is certainly scarcely a town in the eastern region in which there is less life that has returned than here. Of the thirteen hundred

people who lived in German's most eastern little town, scarcely ten have returned to this city of rubble. Not one house is still inhabitable. Only the church still stands hit hard by the shooting, bitten through by the shells, crushed, scarred and shattered. But – it is still standing, even if a ruin. Otherwise there are only the remains of walls, scorched, disintegrated, a picture of gruesome destruction. It was as if a giant hand had swept over it, with ponderous momentum, so as to reduce everything back into earth.

But in the middle of the inextricable piles of bricks and mortar and beams and girders, next to the jagged, smoke-blackened remains of walls, stood a chimney. It stood there crookedly, as if it would collapse in pieces in the next storm wind. And way up in it the stork has built his nest and enthroned himself there in solitary greatness. He has remained loyal to Schirwindt. Faithfully he stands there on one leg, the head stretched out, and blinks at his unaccustomed guests.

East Prussia is beginning to smile again, -- like Hindenburg. And the flood that has come over the province was devastating but also fruitful. That was the address to me, dressed up in beautiful words, by a Dutch colleague [probably van Blankenstein] and traveling companion in a short conversation in Allenstein. When his homeland is flooded, he said, there is also a layer of mud left, full of fertility and life force. And it seemed to him it might be the flood that had swept over East Prussia might be the bringer of a new fertility, something greater, stronger, and which might above all waken a new bustling life, more beautiful and happier life than before, that is buried under the layer of mud.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps they were just at the same places at the same times, but Durborough filmed much that was described by Abrecht in his articles-- the church, the stork, and the ruined Schirwindt, although his intertitles are much less exalted than Abrecht's colorful effusions. Durborough also filmed Count Julius von Mirbach and his family, also mentioned by Abrecht, as well as the ruins of Sorquitty, the von Mirbach castle set on fire by the Russians. In Schirwindt, Durborough filmed a lot of his material, including the von Mirbach family, in what appears to be the market place which had been largely destroyed. And it was here that he filmed some poignant pictures of refugees.





**Figure 12. Refugees in Schirwindt, East Prussia. Frame enlargement from Durborough's film, AFI/Cuneo Collection, Library of Congress, M/B/RS Division, Washington, D.C.**

Next the journalists were off to Wladislawof, just across the border and inside Russia. Both Dutch correspondents, van Blankenstein and Lehr de Waal, found an amazing contrast. At Schirwindt the Russians had burned down all houses forcing people to live in wooden barracks. At Wladislawof, all houses were still intact. Van Blankenstein reported:

We are leaving this sad war memorial [Schirwindt]. Just outside town a small river marks the border with Russia. Once you have crossed it you are in the Russian village of Wladislawof, a place mentioned before in many war reports. But to enter this town isn't easy because the frontier is heavily guarded. Despite our military guides and the cars that we travel in, the whole group of reporters has to show their passports for inspection. Finally, we enter the city which is so much different compared to Schirwindt that is located only a few hundred meters away. The street pavement is – compared to Western European standards – so primitive. It's beyond any comparison, really. A thick layer of dirt covers the street stones and has turned these hilly streets into a horrible mess. The Germans have dug up the stones and used this material to construct some remarkable barricades. The houses are mostly

made out of wood over here, and all of them basically look like a shed. We visit a tea house, but once inside we don't feel any urge to have a drink. On the counter we see a dried herring that has been baked and that seems to attract all flies in the city of Wladislawof. This herring will always be one of my most distasteful memories of the war. Still, these tea houses are a true paradise for soldiers who have just been on the firing lines.<sup>14</sup>

If Lehr de Waal and van Blankenstein were struck by the contrast between the demolished Schirwindt and Wladislawof, Abrecht was equally struck by the same contrast between Schirwindt and the village of Wilkowiski, the easternmost point of the correspondents' journey: "The pictures of Wilkowiski and Schirwindt are opposites. The two villages are only a few kilometers distant from one another. However while in Schirwindt on the German side, the withdrawing Russians burned down every house, on the Russian side, nothing was destroyed in Wilkowiski." <sup>15</sup>

On the road now towards the front, trenches and barbed wire lay along the road, there were many transports and the sound of the guns could be heard. They crossed the Kybartai-Wirballen-Eydtkuhnen sector and turned back across the border to Germany. At Eydtkuhnen, on 1 and 2 August 1914, the Russians had entered the city and destroyed many of the buildings. There was debris everywhere.

The party visited a notable delousing station. Near Eydtkuhnen was located one of eight very large delousing stations at the eastern front. Each one cost 1 million marks and they were all absolutely necessary to combat typhus. All soldiers, up to and including von Hindenburg, were obliged to use the stations before crossing the border. One German soldier reported that in the previous winter at Bolimow, in spite of the minus twenty-degree centigrade cold, lack of supplies and so forth, the lice were the worst problem:

But the worst thing I experienced in the east as well as the cold was the vermin. You really can't believe what we endured there. A few older comrades thankfully knew how to build dugouts, and we learned from them. We used timber from the Russian farm buildings. But the Russian buildings were full of bugs, lice and fleas. They were full of vermin. Whenever you saw someone who suddenly started to scratch himself, there would be a cry of 'You've got lice, you pig!' but everyone else had them, they just didn't know yet. The beasts hid in the recesses of your body.<sup>16</sup>

While they viewed the station at Eydkuhnen, Durborough did not film there, nor did the reporters comment on it in great detail. They saved their breath, and their film, for the delousing station at

Alexandrowo. In Wirballen, van Blankenstein was pleasantly surprised that there was very little damage. "Did the Russians have a guardian angel, perhaps? If you look at the place, you would think that a barrage of shells must have turned these houses into ruins. I knew right away that shells fell into the streets of Wirballen, but we no longer see signs of destruction on our way through this city."<sup>17</sup>

After leaving Wirballen, the group came to the nearby Russian village which van Blankenstein called "K," and which the German records eventually disclosed to be Kybartai, a town now in Lithuania on the border of the Russian oblast of Kaliningrad. They visited a small prisoner of war camp, and there they witnessed an extremely moving religious ceremony as the men sang, some with great feeling, and finished by making the sign of the cross. Van Blankenstein reported:

After this ceremony ended we are all surprised by someone in our own company. Among our group of reporters there's an American movie man [Durborough]. He asks the Russians to repeat their prayers: he would very much like to film this scene! I am telling this story because it is so typical for these American business men. To these people, this whole war apparently is nothing but a chance to make a big movie drama out of it – a spectacle that they can watch and enjoy from a professional point of view. At Pilkallen, this same man recorded a film scene showing a group of marching infantry men. While making this movie he had a problem cranking his film camera and shouted at the commanding officer the only German word that he knew: "*Ein Moment!*" We had a lot of fun hearing him say that. The officer didn't comply with his wishes and had his soldiers march on. This kind of disrespect for the rights of a cinematographer was something the American couldn't understand at all. It was by the way one of the few moments when he didn't get what he wanted.

At "K", the American's wishes also weren't fulfilled but the commanding officers of the POW camp found something to distract him. He ordered the Russians to come back and asked them for volunteers to perform a folklore dance. Yes, who could dance? Laughing out loud, the very best dancers among these soldiers got pushed forward to turn up. Shy and hesitant at first, they started to dance to the music of harmonicas. It was a nice group of men, especially because they seemed to enjoy themselves that much. "With all pleasure, I would make a band of brothers out of this group and join them in battle!" he [Durborough] said. I have to agree with him, it was a splendid selection of soldiers. Nowhere else at the front did I see Russian soldiers who made such a lasting impression on me.<sup>18</sup>

Annie Lehr de Waal described the same scene:

At dusk, we came across a Russian prisoner of war camp. The soldiers were singing their evening prayers - a very melodious song with high and low-pitched voices. The Russians were standing there in rows while singing, with their faces towards the setting sun that was shining a red glow across the fields. Except for some from the Baltic area, most of these Russian soldiers looked quite primitive and simple minded. One of them danced, at the request of our movie men, a *krakowiak* [Polish dance from Cracow]. At that happy moment, none of us had the feeling we were at a prisoner of war camp!<sup>19</sup>

At Eydtkuhnen, Lehr de Waal stated that the Germans also captured a Russian ambulance train that was loaded with champagne stolen in East Prussia as well as many drunk Russian soldiers. From Stallupönen the party went back to Insterburg for the night. The next day, they were off to Darkehmen.

In her fourth report entitled "A Trip through East-Prussia- How the Russians Invaded," Lehr de Waal quotes figures presented to her by the Germans: in the district of Darkehmen, twice invaded by the Russians, about 40% of the area was occupied. The damage initially was minor, but during the second invasion all buildings were destroyed. In one village here a Cossack soldier was accidentally shot at and as a result all men were executed in such a way their women afterwards could not even recognize them.<sup>20</sup> This village, Christiankehmen, was now known as the village of the widows.

The same thing happened at Goldap, the correspondents were told. Abrecht told a story that is still found in the history books about Goldap:

The Russians in East Prussia in many cases proceeded in ways for which there is no explanation. In absurd, completely incomprehensible ways. If their actions had some purpose, perhaps one could figure them out. But sometimes they did things about which bring reason to a complete halt.

For instance in Goldap, during the second invasion they burned the new hospital to the ground. Together with the equipment. All the beds, linen and surgical instruments were completely destroyed and then they demolished the building. Opposite the hospital was a high school building. At the same moment in which they destroyed the hospital, they built a military field hospital in the high school...<sup>21</sup>

Lehr de Waal reported that Goldap and the hospital had been burnt by the Caucasian army using celluloid tapes that they were shown. 350 people from this city were killed and deported to Russia. On a more personal note, the author added that she found most of these atrocity stories hard to believe,

which is also why she made notes but did not talk with the local people about them. As an example, she mentioned that she did not talk with a group of old women who were already in their 70s, who claimed they had been raped by Russian soldiers.

From Goldap the reporters all went by car to Rominten and there visited the Imperial Hunting Lodge. Here Lehr de Waal and Joseph Danziger both reported they saw how sculptures and paintings showing Kaiser Wilhelm that had been destroyed by Russian troops. Inside Rominten no house was standing, the city was in ruins and children were playing amidst debris and sleeping in cellars. In the evening, they entered Rastenburg, located in the area of the Masurian Lakes and here they noticed many signs of heavy fighting that had taken place in the forests.

According to Lehr de Waal's fifth report, dated Berlin 19 July 1915, on the third day of their trip through East Prussia the correspondents visited the cities of Rastenburg, Sensburg, Johannsburg, Ortelsburg and Allenstein.<sup>22</sup>

Visit to "X" [censored]: millions of rubber tires, woolen socks and clothes for the upcoming winter are collected. Portraits of von Hindenburg everywhere. Inspecting ambulances for the front. People here in East Prussia are remarkably calm and undisturbed by the war and reveal a great inner strength.<sup>23</sup>

Abrecht has a shot in the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung Kriegs-Album*, which also appears unattributed in *Der grosse Krieg in Bildern* of the German ambulances, in particular one with a trailer behind to accommodate additional wounded. Durborough also filmed these ambulances, although from a slightly different angle. Those shots were probably taken at "X." Since the official report on the trip refers to "*Etappeninspektion X Insterburg*", it is possible that "X" is Insterburg.

Lehr de Waal and the correspondents visited Sorquitten, the Mirbach castle burned down by the Russians, which Durborough filmed. Next they drove to Johannsburg, located by Lake Spirding, where 150 people were killed. Abrecht, continuing his article describing the irrationality of some of the Russian behavior, recounts a story about Johannsburg:



In Johannisburg they took down the Bismarck monument and either carried it off or threw it into the river. They left the base. They first of all destroyed the largest, most modern building, the Hotel Graf York. In with the torches, and red blazed the flames from roof and window! Later, when the staff moved into town, they had to make do with far inferior accommodations than those that the beautiful majestic hotel might have provided.<sup>24</sup>

Joseph Danziger of the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, another correspondent from the United States, adds this account of its sad fate:

In the Kreis Johannisburg, 1500 civilians, mostly women, were taken captive across the border, and entire villages are now deserted because the inhabitants have not been able to come home. Not a stick of furniture, a carpet or curtain remained in the town of Johannisburg after the second Russian occupation.<sup>25</sup>

On the road to Allenstein they saw one of the most beautiful landscapes of East Prussia: corn fields, lakes, forest and heather. It was dark when they arrived at Allenstein. The Russians had only occupied Allenstein for 24 hours and the city was saved from destruction because, according to Lehr de Waal, an order to destroy it was intercepted from a Russian pilot. They stayed there for one full day and according to Lehr de Waal, had a wonderful time. In the morning they visited several churches and military compounds, in the afternoon they walked in a forest nearby, followed by an informal dinner with the mayor and other guests during which a military band played music for them.

The official report of the tour mentions General der Kavallerie Limbrecht Graf von Schlieffen among the notables who hosted the correspondents, and Durborough filmed himself talking with him. This is of course not the famous Count Otto von Schlieffen who developed the von Schlieffen plan to invade France and had died in 1913, but a relative. Durborough's description of him as a cog in the General Staff seems true enough, because Limbrecht von Schlieffen was the deputy commanding general of the 20th Armeekorps, which had fought at Tannenberg, the Masurian lakes and halfway across Poland. Since the 20th Corps was very active in East Prussia as well as Poland, it is possible that Durborough and Ries traveled with units belonging to the 20th Corps. These shots were probably taken at Allenstein, where the 20th Corps was based. If so, they would have dated from June of 1915, probably while the correspondents visited the military compounds mentioned above.



**Figure 13. Durborough posing for his movie camera, supposedly talking with General von Schlieffen at Allenstein, June 1915. In reality he didn't speak a word of German.**

Durborough filmed a large cavalry unit moving through Allenstein. Judging from this film, the report that Allenstein escaped relatively unscathed from the Russian occupation seems verified, although the city suffered in other ways. Joseph Danziger described what he saw:

"... The rest of the trip was a repetition of what had gone before. Always there had been an exhibition of purposeless, almost insane cruelty and destructiveness. Always the story of the plundering of stores and houses, of the bringing of civilians to judge the values of the plunder and took it back to Russia, in wagons, if the town were near the border, by special freight trains if the distance were too great.

Oberbuergermeister Zuelsch of the city has just told me an interesting story of the Russian occupation [in Allenstein]. On the second day after their arrival the commandant came to him with the demand that he furnish 200,000 pounds of bread within twenty-four hours or suffer the town to be laid in ashes. Zuelsch tried to explain that such a thing was impossible under existing conditions as there were only (sic) thousand people left in the city and most of these knew nothing about baking. 'However the Russian would not listen to reason, he said he must have the bread and

furthermore hold me personally responsible for its delivery. I summoned all the people who had remained in the city, and found there were only eight bakers among them. These I set to work at once while the remainder were instructed to break open all the houses and secure what had been left in them. In this way we secured several hundred pounds though most of it was many days old. But the Russian devoured the hard bread with great activity they having been compelled to live off raw potatoes and other field roots during a several days march. In the meantime I had organized the population into a baking squad and as most of them did not know to handle the machinery I called upon a Polish baker in the Russian army to show them. By working day and night we were able to deliver fifty thousand pounds during the following day and so saved our town from destruction.”<sup>26</sup>

In writing about Allenstein, Danziger also mentioned something described by other writers. In the first invasion by the Russians in August of 1914, the Russian troops behaved more or less correctly. Danziger attributes this to the fact that the Russians planned to stay on permanently, and so had no reason to destroy it, and also because the Russian General Rennenkampf, a gentleman of the old school, was commanding elite Russian troops. On the other hand, in the second invasion in November, troops from Khirgistan, Turkestan, Siberians and Cossacks were the invading force, and according to Danziger, they acted as barbarians.<sup>27</sup>

But if Allenstein got off relatively unscathed, Ortelsburg was totally destroyed, as Durborough's shots of the rubble and ruined buildings document. It resembled the Roman town of Pompeii. Three times the enemy invaded this area. After it had been burnt down by the Russians on 27 August 1914, it was utterly destroyed by shelling when the Russians retreated after the defeat at Tannenberg. Inside the city 156 houses and 321 sheds were destroyed. Most of the refugees had returned by now but they found it hard to find a place to live. Despite all the misery people were not downhearted and they were genuinely happy to meet the correspondents.



**Figure 14. Frame enlargement of a traveling shot taken from an automobile by Durborough and Ries of what is probably Rastenburger Strasse in Ortelsburg.**

Below is a photo supposedly shot at Ortelsburg, according to Durborough, but it actually was taken at Neidenburg.



**Figure 15. Shot of Russian prisoners, according to the intertitle, clearing rubble at Ortelsburg. Frame enlargement from Durborough's film.**



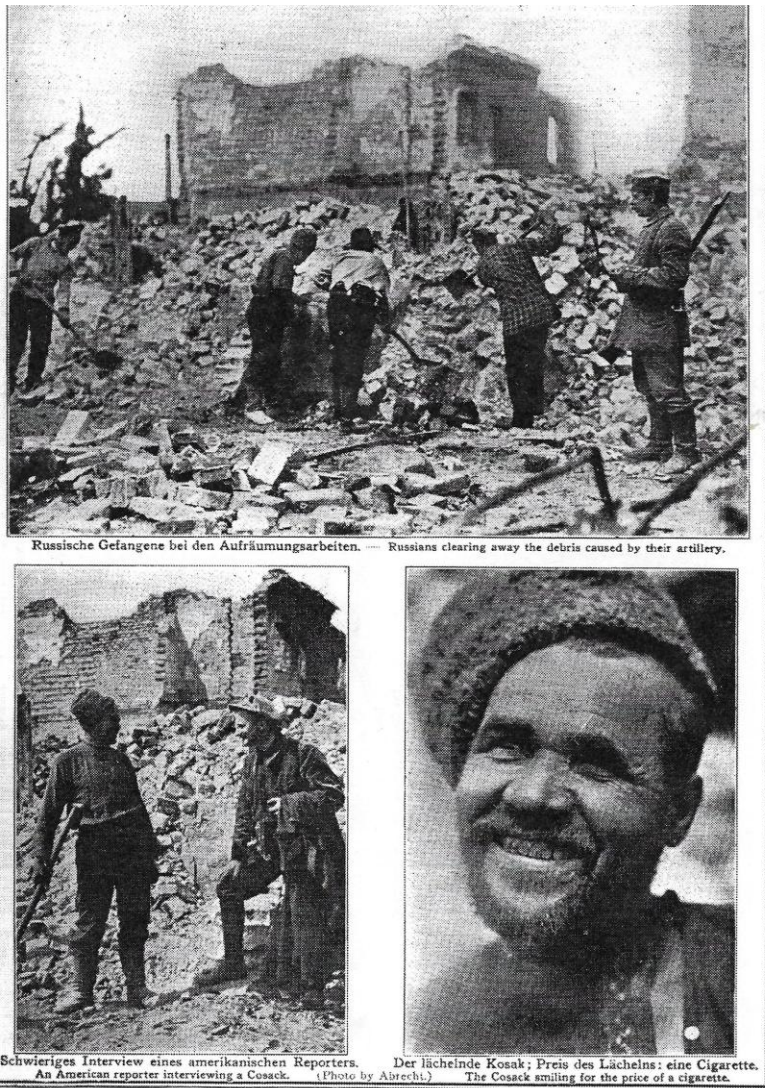


Figure 16. Shots of Russian prisoners from New Yorker Staats-Zeitung, *Kriegs-Album*, 28 August 1915. According to Durborough's intertitle from the film, they are clearing rubble at Ortelsburg. The American reporter in the photograph is probably Arthur G. Abrecht. Again, although Abrecht gets a photo credit on the page, there is no proof that Abrecht took the photo at the top. It could have been shot by Durborough, or any other correspondent on the trip for that matter, but it does suggest again that Abrecht and Durborough were of the same mind.



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Figure 17. Shot of the stork on the chimney in Schirwindt, and another shot of the prisoners clearing rubble. It is clear that these are the same prisoners as in the two shots above, but this time they are identified as being in Neidenburg. *Der Grosse in Bildern*, No 7, p. 11.





Figure 18. A copy of the same photograph - an infinitely better copy - found online. The photograph was from the Berliner Verlag/Archive, but was sold online by Alamy.com. Image ID: DW32P. Copyright © [dpa picture alliance/ Alamy Stock Photo](#).

According to Lehr de Waal's sixth and final report, on the next day – the final day of their trip through East-Prussia – the correspondents viewed the fields of Hohenstein and Tannenberg where von Hindenburg's strategy had saved East Prussia and Germany from the invading Russian forces.<sup>28</sup>

The sixth report, dated Berlin 23 July 1915, opens with a description of the battle at Tannenberg, quoting some lines from a book by Hans Niemann. The place, the author says, where they arrived at a lake with a forest in the background showing no signs whatsoever of a battle, unlike the graves and trenches that the correspondents had seen before. Although Durborough and Ries were almost a year late, they photographed the location of the battle. Many of Hindenburg's defenses were still in place. They also filmed at several locations of the Battle of the Masurian Lakes, most notably a lake which had been frozen the previous winter, which the Russians had tried to cross. According to Durborough's intertitles, the Germans, who had mined it, blew up the ice early in January 1915 and 10,000 Russians

drowned. On 29 March 1915, the *Sacramento Union* printed an article originating in Königsberg reporting that a German soldier had witnessed the three Russian companies attempting a sneak attack against German positions by crossing a frozen lake, and the Germans annihilated them by the simple expedient of using artillery to blow up the ice, but the authors have been unable to verify whether this is the same battle to which Durborough is referring.

One thing that all the correspondents reported in their tour of the Masurian Lakes is their beauty. The beauty comes through in Durborough's film, even though the landscape had been recently scarred by war, and these shots were made on orthochromatic film over 100 years ago. Lehr de Waal states that the next part of this report was cut by the German censor. The authors are going to hazard a guess and surmise that the censor was worried about the correspondents' encounter with Field Marshal von Hindenburg, especially as Abrecht states that there was a censorship restriction on the story.

In the same article cited above about Schirwindt, Abrecht tells a great story about Durborough, and his filming of Field Marshall von Hindenburg. Much of the article is a hymn of praise to Hindenburg, and describes how a glimpse of the real man dispelled all the previous conceptions that Abrecht had had of him:

Where did I see him? Perhaps I should explain this later. Temporarily there is a notice posted on this matter due to very strict censorship. It is ultimately beside the point. We were somewhere on the road in East Prussia, with two small side trips into Russia. Neutral journalists, movie people and German photographers, were led by a representative of the Highest General Staff and the Foreign Office. It was at the time when the sun was already deep in the west. We had driven through a town and had arrived outside by the wire enclosure which rose out of the water and stretched out twenty meters wide along the bank as far as the eye could see. Suddenly we made a halt. Our trip-general and our trip-minister climbed out and there was short secretive conference with an officer, then rang out the signal "*Aussteigen.*" We climbed out of the autos, "Only the small photographic apparatuses can be brought with you," was then called out. Which understandably caused the movie people to bring along their movie cameras.

For the moment, no one knew what or whom was to be photographed, but soon the people got the word that that "*der Hindenburg*" was there, and perhaps we would get to see him, if only from a distance. That was enough for the photographic part of our expedition, but for the people of the pen, it would have been better if we had been able to interview him, in accordance with all the rules of the craft. But nevertheless it was a great joy for us. We marched into the city and planted

ourselves in front of a house that could only be distinguished from the other houses by the two sentry boxes placed in front of it. Around the entryway, a fairly large group of people had gathered. The army was strongly represented. We got standing room in the first row. Way in front were the movie people, naturally, -- we had two of the kind with us -- and were ready. As an officer saw that, he yelled out, aghast: '*Meine Herren*, for God's sake, do not film. The Marshal will never endure it. It is under all circumstances forbidden.' Whereupon the German cinematographer pretended that he was packing up his tripod. But the other, the American, [Durborough] came up to me for enlightenment. If he did not understand something, or he was trying to gain time, then he would act as if he did not understand a word of German. When I had translated the 'Forbidden' of the officers, he expressed his opinion contemptuously [in English in the original]: 'Tell him what the h... he thinks we came here for', and pushed his camera further forward. I did not understandably divulge to the officer what he said. I would cover myself.

Now among our travelers was "'Little Grohs," a capable photographer as well as a charming man, even if he is also a Berliner. From the General Staff and the Foreign Office he had gotten not only the permission, but the direct assignment to photograph everything that came in front of his lens. On the strength of this assignment Grohs summoned up his courage and marched into the entryway. At double time, the officer ran after him. 'Where do you think you're going?'

'To His Excellence. I have already photographed His Excellence many times. Besides, I have the assignment to photograph Death and the Devil. I'm going to the Marshal.'<sup>29</sup>

And he went. But he never made it to the Marshal. A recommendation was not necessary, because President von Batocki, who by chance was staying in the city, and our officers had already made contact with the commander in chief of the forces operating in the east. The Marshal had at first thought that he had been filmed enough, and people would ultimately think of him that he had nothing to do except to be filmed. But finally, he gave his permission. And the officer came out and informed us that photographs as well as films could be taken. Whereupon the American movie operator moved his camera a few feet closer so that his German colleague began to curse loudly and exclaim that the American was treading on his toes.

In the meantime, it was now seven thirty. 'If the Marshall does not come soon, it's going to be dark,' said the cinema man from Chicago. 'Then he will find out who will photograph him.' The amateur photographers packed up their cameras, since for them, in the dwindling light there was nothing more they could do. When all of a sudden the German soldiers who formed an honor guard in the entryway, pulled themselves up with a jerk. The rifles of the guards flew from their shoulders. Everyone who was wearing field grey stood at attention. The cinematographers began to crank, and out of the portal came General Field Marshal von Hindenburg, with his slow, steady, springy step. The right arm went to his cap in a salute. The head, seemingly small in relation to his huge body, nodded; saluting to the right, to the left, to the right and to the left. The expression is certainly deeply serious, but the seriousness has something a bit festive, not that hardness and strictness, as in the

picture that hangs in my study. And the eyes look in no way so gruesome, and the mustache is most certainly not so frightfully martial.

As Hindenburg gazed at the cine-cameras and cameras that were aimed at him, he murmured almost inaudibly, 'Oh my, so many', and there was a twitch at the corner of his sharply carved mouth. The bushy ends of his golden-brown moustache reached outwards, out of the twitching around the corner of his mouth, came a grin which became a broad amused smile, the weather beaten face took a winning expression of serene goodness and gentleness, such as I have never seen in any of his pictures. His eyes twinkled merrily, the crows' feet lengthened up to his gray temples, the countenance of the man who was already over seventy, rejuvenated to the face of a man of fifty in spite of his wrinkles and creases...

It only took a few steps for the Marshal to get to the auto, and the smile was still on his face as he was sitting and the 'tatutata' of his horn sounded. It was then that it occurred to me that nobody cried out 'Hurrah', or had wished the Marshall 'Hoch soll er leben.' On this trip we have already wished quite everybody a *Hochleben* that possibly could have been *Hochlebened*, that one more *Hoch* to the liberator of East Prussia would simply not have been suitable. But you can measure what an impression this made on us. And so, this was how I saw the Field Marshal on that evening, I will keep this in my memory for the rest of my life, so great, so phenomenal, and with it so gentle and so good. So I have no picture from the wall, and another will not take its place.<sup>30</sup>



Figure 19-21. Field Marshall Hindenburg at Allenstein. Film frames from Durborough's movie.





Figure 20



Figure 21

The above frame enlargements demonstrate that von Hindenburg was perhaps not such a kindly grandfather figure as Abrecht states. While he is not sinister, he does appear worried and distracted,



perhaps thinking more about the Russians or his nemesis General von Falkenhayn than the journalists. He does salute with his right hand once, but he holds the salute for most of the shot, so it is difficult to say whether he is simply holding the salute or hiding his face. It is also probable that some people were close enough to him as he entered his car in the last frame enlargement to hear what he said, so it is difficult to discount totally what Abrecht reported on the encounter.<sup>31</sup> Durborough places the Hindenburg footage chronologically between the material on Schirwindt and Allenstein, so it is difficult to say exactly on what day or where the actual filming took place.

Lehr de Waal mentions the reporters were near Hohenstein, and then she explains that the historical battle was named after Tannenberg because of events that had taken place in the 15th century when the German colonists fought against the Slavs. Neidenburg, she mentions, was the "last destroyed city that we saw during our trip". After the battle at Tannenberg most of the German refugees had returned to East Prussia. On the road to Osterode they witnessed signs of heavy fighting everywhere. All the houses had been damaged by shelling and there was no door without bullet holes. The final reception of the journalists was at Osterode and from there in a few hours the reporters went by train back to Thorn.

It is difficult to say when the correspondents visited the delousing station at Alexandrowo, but since they went by special train from Thorn it is likely that it was during the time that they were back in Thorn before the end of their trip. It is clear that the Germans were proud of the facility at Alexandrowo. It had the capacity of accommodating 12,000 persons in 24 hours, and was so celebrated that the Germans even distributed a postcard of it. Abrecht was quite taken with the delousing station and described his visit in some detail, as well as taking several photographs of the facility there:

At five A.M. our train, a special train ordered just for us that naturally included a dining car to boot, traveled from Thorn over the border to Alexandrowo. And when we were back in Thorn, I had an extremely valuable document in my possession, the much sought after (and rightly so) certificate of delousing. This paper I will have framed. I will have [to] hang it one day with my other war trophies. Certainly I am not a little proud of it. Genuine? Certainly the document is genuine. It carries the beautiful blue stamp with the eagle, the royal Prussian eagle and the transcription "Military Sanitary Institute Alexandrowo" and the signature of Senior Staff Physician Dr. Seydel....<sup>32</sup>



Figure 22. Frame enlargement of the delousing station from Durborough's film.



Figure 23. *Kriegs-Album*, *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 28 August 1915, page 10

The photographs that appeared in the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung Kriegs Album* show that this was the facility that Durborough filmed.<sup>33</sup> Durborough incorporated the footage later in the film, but it was shot during the tour of East Prussia.

Arriving in Posen, they all returned to Berlin.<sup>34</sup> After the tour of East Prussia ended, Durborough and Ries apparently returned to Berlin after 22 June with the other correspondents, and did not then travel farther east into Poland.

The Germans were quite pleased by the results of the trip. Josef Schumacher reported:

Regarding the major cities: Mayor Dr. Körte of Königsberg had taken care of preparations in this town. He also directed personally part of the program of sight-seeing. In Allenstein was Mayor Zülch, as well as the Commanding General of the XX. Army Corps, Count von Schlieffen who was present. President von Hellmann accompanied and welcomed the foreign journalists; in Posen Mayor Dr. Wilma and several members of the city council. Here on behalf of the authorities of the "Festung Posen" Major Reiff guided the reporters while visiting military locations. In Thorn Mayor Dr. Hasse took care of all preparations. On the trip from Thorn to Alexandrowo General von der Lancken had prepared the sight-seeing.

The foreign reporters said they were very pleased with this trip. According to the journalists, an extraordinary amount of news stories have been generated as a result of this. As an example, the Dutch reporter Mrs. Annie Lehr de Waal has produced a series of 24 articles on the [German] East, while the reporter of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* [van Blankenstein] and the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung* [Abrecht] produced 6 extensive articles on this trip. These inevitably led to a comparison between the Belgian cities that have been destroyed as a result of the war and the destruction done by the Russians in the German East. The way the vigorous activity in agriculture, already being carried out, and in the rebuilding of houses has made a wonderful impression on the reporters.

For the photographers and cinematographers as well, this trip proved to be productive, although photographers have taken pictures in these cities before. Part of these photographs will be published in issue No. 7 of *Der Grosse Krieg in Bildern*, another batch had been released for publication in illustrated magazines in neutral countries abroad. Some of the film footage has already been exported abroad.<sup>35</sup>

## Warsaw and Novo Georgievsk

Durborough's film gives the impression that the trip to East Prussia melded seamlessly with the trip to Russian Poland.<sup>36</sup> The reality is more complicated. In fact, there were two trips. It was only in August that Durborough headed for the German drive toward Warsaw and Novo Georgievsk. While the trip to East Prussia was meticulously planned, the later trip to Warsaw and Novo Georgievsk seems to have been arranged quickly in response to a barrage of events on the eastern front. Heading toward Poland, they joined another group of correspondents. These included Walter Niebuhr, the brother of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, Oswald Schuette of the *Chicago Daily News* and James O'Donnell Bennett of the *Chicago Tribune*. Also heading east was Harry Carr of the *Los Angeles Times* and *Photoplay Magazine*.

There were good military and propaganda reasons for the sudden second trip east: in May 1915, even before the foreign neutrals had started their trip to East Prussia, German Army Chief of Staff Erich von Falkenhayn ordered a massive attack by Austrian and German forces under the command of General August von Mackensen at Gorlice-Tarnow in Polish Galicia, further to the south. Their objective was to push the Russian forces completely out of Poland and they achieved some success in doing so. Nevertheless, it was felt that it would take a lot of pressure off von Mackensen if Ober Ost, comprising the northern forces that had been successful in East Prussia and the Masurian Lakes, could initiate a pincers by also attacking the Russians. But until July, the *Ober-Ost* forces under Generals von Hindenburg and Ludendorff in the north took no part in the offensive, perhaps partly due to the rivalry between Ober Ost and Army Chief of Staff von Falkenhayn. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were very displeased, perhaps one reason Hindenburg looks rather preoccupied in the film Durborough took of him. Finally von Falkenhayn agreed resulting in Ober Ost attacking the Russian forces on 13 July 1915.

Ober Ost, the Germans on the northern front, who had formed four new armies, started a major offensive in the direction of Warsaw and the fortress of Novo Georgievsk. The Germans attacked over the Narev River on 19 July and established a bridgehead by 23 July. But the attack bogged down because of determined Russian defenses and the swampy terrain along the Narev and Bobr Rivers. It was only after the Worysch Corp farther south established a bridgehead across the Vistula on 29 July that the Russians started withdrawing. On 19 July the Russians had already decided that the German breakthrough on the Narev, plus the German-Austrian advances on their southern flank, had produced such a

dangerous threat in Poland that they had to give up Warsaw along with most of Poland. Grand Duke Nicholas himself, the Tsar's Chief of Staff, ordered that retreat to the Vistula was required, otherwise significant forces would be cut off in Poland. He told Alexeyev, the head of the Russian North West front, "You can evacuate Warsaw if you must." A general retreat was ordered and the German XII Army, under General Max von Gallwitz entered Warsaw on 4 August 1915.<sup>37</sup>

As all this movement suggests, the war here was entirely different from that on the western front. While the western front had already frozen into static trench warfare, the war in the east was still largely a war of movement. Best of all from a correspondent's point of view, things were happening: the Germans were capturing cities, blowing up fortresses, taking huge numbers of prisoners, and armies were clashing in a dramatic manner. There were even cavalry charges, and Uhlans and Hussars are prominent in Durborough's motion pictures. Some of the shots in the films look more like the Crimean War than World War I. As Dennis E. Showalter puts it:

The East Prussian theatre, unlike the western front, was characterized by a low ratio of force to space. In France and Belgium one usually knew where the enemy was: everywhere. Opportunities for tactical and operational reconnaissance were correspondingly limited. In the east at this stage of the war, cavalry was just as necessary as in the days of Napoleon or Genghis Khan.<sup>38</sup>



**Figure 24.** Durborough, Walter Niebuhr and Oswald F. Schuette working on the Stutz somewhere in the wild East with the intertitle: "The American camp. Mr. Schuette of the *Chicago Daily News* is some mechanic as well as one of the best newspaper men I have ever met."



Some of the flavor of the war in the east can be sensed in Durborough's film as he drove the Stutz across the Polish plains. He encountered and filmed Baron Ernst von Wrangel, head of a battalion of motorized sharpshooters. Von Wrangel was the grandson of the famous General Field Marshal Friedrich Graf von Wrangel who had played an extremely important part in Prussia's wars of expansion in the nineteenth century. Von Wrangel must have been something of a soldier of fortune. He had been a corporal in the Spanish American War. In 1904 he had joined the Boers in South Africa and was quite close to Otto von Lossburg, head of the German volunteers. According to one source, he was also on the staff of the French Colonel Villeboois-Mareuil, another foreign volunteer in the Boer War.



**Figure 25. German soldiers break from their cover in the woods somewhere in central Poland. Film frame from Durborough's movie.**



Figure 26. German lancers riding through Warsaw, 15 August 1915. Film frame from Durborough's movie.

Thus on 4 August 1915, the German XII Army under General Max von Gallwitz entered Warsaw unopposed.<sup>39</sup>

Bennett reported:

The German General Staff took us out over the wide Warsaw plain in a black and shining motorbus that held sixteen people uncomfortably and that from one point of view bore a sobering resemblance to an auto-hearse, while from another, it recalled those reeling vehicles that hurl the hostess and the entire dinner party through the icy streets to the theatre... All along the way out of town triple spans of horses were plunging down the river bank with the munition wagons and out to the pontoon bridge, which was fairly streaming with these wagon trains. On the masts at the entrance of this bridge the German flag and the Hungarian flag, which is broad stripes of green, white and red, and the most striking combination of national colors I ever saw, were flying, and half a mile down the yellow river the shattered spans of the enormous Alexandrowski Bridge, which is nearly 600 yards long, and which the Russians had blown up, went lurching along to Praga.<sup>40</sup>





**Figure 27. Warsaw as seen from Praga, on the east bank of the Vistula. The Alexandrowski Bridge is in the background.**

Warsaw was undamaged except for the bridges across the Vistula that had been dynamited to slow the German advance. As Durborough photographed it, Warsaw appeared a very attractive city, and if there was no great enthusiasm for the Germans, there was not much evidence of any great Polish hostility toward them. Durborough photographed fresh troops moving through the main streets, the Alexandrowski Bridge, the pontoon bridges that the Germans built across the Vistula, Zeppelins flying over the city, and refugees being ferried across the river by the Germans. He also shot footage in the Jewish Quarter.

The Jews, after a hundred years of anti-Semitic Russian occupation, seemed happy enough to see the Germans, who at this point were promising a new era of equal rights for the Polish Jews. Hindenburg

and Ludendorff had posters in Hebrew and Yiddish mounted promising a new era of civil rights for Jews in Poland. In reality, the situation for the Jews in Poland did not change much.

In general, the Russian withdrawal from Poland was successfully accomplished, the major exception being the huge fortress of Novo Georgievsk (Modlin). The fortress was supposedly the lynchpin of the Russian defenses as well as a symbol of Russian rule in Poland, and the Russians could not bring themselves to abandon it. When it was suggested that the Russians evacuate the fortress, General Mikhail Vasiliyevitch Alexeyev, Commander of the Russian North Western Front, said that “spiritual motives speak for its defense”. Alexeyev did nothing to make it stronger, either, and sent only third rate, worn out troops for its defense. A new belt of forts that were to strengthen its perimeter was never finished. In fact, the fort was obsolete and could not have withstood even the artillery of 1870. It would have made no difference if Novo Georgievsk had been modernized and defended by better troops.

There was virtually no example of any fortress holding out against the giant field guns of World War I. General Hans Hartwig von Beseler, known as “Battering Ram Beseler” to the correspondents, had reduced Antwerp and Liege to rubble with his 42 centimeter mortars, and was ordered to accomplish the same result at Novo Georgievsk with Austrian 30.5 mortars. It did not help the Russians that the Germans captured their chief engineer while he was carrying all the plans for the fortress on his person. James O’Donnell Bennett described the eve of the fall of Novo Georgievsk rather poignantly:

Beyond the immediate environs of Warsaw the plain is marked off in potato and cabbage patches, and the present picture derives its historical interest solely from superb trenches, many of which the Russians never used, and from the grass-grown humps of forts which Napoleon would have found useful – indeed, he started the building of the fortress of Novo Georgievsk in 1807 – but which did not withstand long in these days even so much as the threat of the Austrian “thirty-point-fives ....” All day long we wandered amid such scenes, and finally, what with the body’s thirst and leg weariness, the mind ceased to react upon them, and men looked with a tired eye on the most stupendous evidences of destruction and woe. Besides, to most of these men, the shifting and shattering of huge blocks of concrete and the laying bare of the innards of fortresses was an old story, and the fresh survey of these things served only to confirm what they had learned at Liege and Maubeuge and Antwerp and Przemysl, and that is this war brings the end of the stationary fortress and establishes the validity of the field fortress which moles and mines its way from week to week and month to month into the vitals of an enemy’s position.<sup>41</sup>

On returning to Warsaw, Bennett and the other correspondents learned that two of the perimeter forts had already fallen, and the rest were expected to fall soon. Novo Georgievsk finally surrendered on 19 August. The Germans captured 700 guns and 90,000 Russian prisoners, including thirty generals. Oswald Schuette described one of the final artillery bombardments of the Fort:

Last night I witnessed the bombardment of the remaining forts of this great Russian stronghold and saw the frightful effectiveness of the heavy German batteries. It was like a display of gorgeous fireworks, especially when one fort was blown up by Gen. von Beseler, who now adds the capture of Novo Georgievsk to his famous reduction of Antwerp.

The general explained to the correspondents present that the fall of the fortress was of great importance, as it was the last Russian obstruction on the Vistula river and the largest transportation road in Poland.

Yesterday, at Czerwinsk, near this fortress, I saw a German steamer from Danzig and a little later this vessel will be able to go clear to Warsaw.

The night bombardment of Novo Georgievsk was an unforgettable picture. One seldom sees beauties in war, but the softness of night concealed the terrible cruelties of death resulting from the rain of high explosive shells. One saw only the light of the firing and heard the magnificent thunder of the cannon without hearing the cries from the torn ranks of the Russian soldiery.<sup>42</sup>

Walter Niebuhr also reported on the climax, and his report is in many ways the most useful of the lot. He mentions accompanying Durborough and renders a vivid description of what he witnessed. In addition, his description of himself and Durborough observing the battle together tallies very well with a shot from Durborough's film, showing the two of them huddled together on a hill in the near darkness:

Photographer Durborough and I came from Serock, bound for the battle scene at Novo Georgievsk. For three hours we had been travelling from Warsaw, through shattered villages, across pontoon bridges, past miles of abandoned trenches, among clumps of torn and bleeding pines. We had now arrived at the outer edge of the chain which the Germans and Austrians were tightening around the massive fortress of Novo Georgievsk. As far as the eye could see from the heights of Fort Dembe lines of trenches, many of them hastily dug, wound their sinuous way across the level landscape. Wasted efforts. Most of them were never used! Two miles from the battle line we left the automobile, which was placed under the cover of a clump of trees, and we proceeded on foot.

In the company of an officer I was permitted to crawl to the top of a hill, from where the battle could be observed from the shelter of another little dugout. Delicate white puffs, distinctly



visible against the clear sky, marked the bursting of the Russian grenades, directed at the German lines. Machine guns were drumming their 'rat-tat-tat' with an almost monotonous consistency.

At intervals came the sonorous boom of a mortar, followed by a rolling echo from the hills beyond the river. We could see the shell explode at almost the same instant the sound reached our ears. A volcanic spray of dirt, concrete, and other debris, followed by a cloud of dust, marked the spot where the shell had found its nest. The main citadels of Novo Georgievsk lay in the elbow made by the juncture of the Wkra and Narev Rivers. Directly in front of the Wkra mouth, a little island split the Narev, and upon this island stood one of the eight outer forts which guarded the main citadels. It was at this fort that the German-Austrian shells were now directed.

First intermittently, then with a final desperate splurge, the guns of the island stronghold spat out their reddish flames. The complete destruction of the fort seemed but the work of moments. Soon its guns were silent, its ruins smoldered feebly, its work was done. The remainder of the garrison had jumped into steel pontoons and fled into the citadel. It was the fifth and last of the eight outer forts to fall that day. And these strongholds had been equipped for an eight months siege! <sup>43</sup>



**Figure 28. The kaiser in his automobile at the kaiser review. The man in the coat appears to be Sven Hedin, personally invited by Hindenburg to attend.**

Now came the high point of Durborough's trip to Germany and perhaps of his career. The correspondents were sent to view the fortress of Novo Georgievsk after it fell. Included in the party were Durborough, Bennett, Schuette and Harry Carr. While they were there, with great fanfare, the kaiser arrived to review his troops and thank them for the great victory. There were 10,000 men there to greet the kaiser, and among them was Field Marshal von Hindenburg. Bennett wrote in part:

Then the Kaiser talked with and congratulated the mild-eyed and boyish-faced von Beseler, the German battering ram, whose gentle appearance is deceiving. The Chief of Staff, von Falkenhayn, and the War Minister, Wild von Hönenborn, joined the intimate group with the Kaiser's personal entourage of high dignitaries, the civil and military Cabinet, staff of Generals, and other notables hovering near for the impressive ceremony. A dozen honor men, heroes of Novo Georgievsk, were presented to the Kaiser, who questioned each and shook his hand. Then Hindenburg himself pinned Iron Crosses of the first class to their breasts. The Kaiser's every handclasp said plainer than words, "well done". Then came a dramatic moment as the Kaiser, with a catch in his voice called out, "Leb' wohl, meine Truppen" ("Fare well, my troops"). Several bearded fighters near me brushed their hands across their eyes, deeply moved. There was many a catch in 10,000 throats as the chorus "Adieu, Majestät" rose and died.<sup>44</sup>

Bennett also wrote another article about the Kaiser Parade at Novo Georgievsk for the journal *Christian Century* that raised a story probably having to do with Durborough although it could have been Harry Carr. After having delivered fulsome, quasi-religious praise of the kaiser, he goes on to deal with the profane:

Nevertheless the inevitable brash American was present and no sooner had the strains of the kaiser anthem died away than one of them lit a long cigar and started puffing. A Roumanian did the same. 'This is not correct, not correct, decidedly not correct,' whispered an Argentine correspondent, and a Dutchman added: 'No one does not smoke at the kaiser parade.' The American glared and then dropped his cigar.<sup>45</sup>

Besides being a correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*, Harry Carr also wrote articles for film journals in the Los Angeles area. He wrote a special article in *Photoplay* about Durborough called "Capturing the Kaiser." Carr also brings up the cigar business, although he does not blame Durborough for it:

I never believed they intended us to see it; but we accidentally bumped into the most majestic of military ceremonies – a Kaiser review.... Durborough begged our officer to let him slip in between the files and shoot a picture. The worthy captain looked as though he was going to faint at the suggestion. “Aw just for a minute”, pleaded Durborough pathetically, but the captain had turned from him to a correspondent who had lit a cigar. “One does not smoke at a Kaiser review”, he said in a thunderous stage whisper. Which shows what kind of a thing a Kaiser review is. Finally the ceremony came to a close. “Adieu, Comrades!” cried the Kaiser. “Adieu Majesty!” they shouted back. The ranks fell back; the square opened. The Kaiser strode back to his auto and climbed in. Spying Dr. Sven Hedin, the famous Swedish explorer, in the crowd, the Emperor beckoned him to the car.

This was more than Durborough could stand. He suddenly broke away and we saw him running full tilt across the cleared place that the awe of the soldiers had left around His Majesty. Our captain was too much overcome to follow. The captain just stood waiting for an offended heaven to strike dead the impious wretch. To the frozen horror of the whole German Army, Durborough set up his machine about thirty feet away from the Kaiser’s car and began grinding away for dear life. The Kaiser looked up and took in the whole situation with his quick, comprehending eyes. He laughed and lit a cigarette, talking a while longer, we believe, to give the plucky Yankee boy a chance. Finally the Emperor and Dr. Hedin shook hands; the chauffeur of the car threw in the hop and the Imperial auto started with a leap. As it went by him, Durborough took off his hat and said with honest sociability, “Much obliged!” The Kaiser straightened up and one gauntleted hand rose to the visor of his helmet in salute to the American boy who had had the nerve to snap an Emperor without asking permission.<sup>46</sup>

Carr’s report of the incident got a banner headline in the *Los Angeles Times* on Sunday, 29 August 1915. The story ran on the top of page one and essentially recapitulated Bennett’s story. But Carr does explain the change in position of the camera in relation to the kaiser’s automobile seen in the footage, which shows the kaiser’s automobile going right past the camera:

After the review the Kaiser went to see the stricken fortress. We tried to follow, but our auto was stuck in the mud. The roads had been made into mush by the artillery and transport wheels, and our auto stuck fast. As we struggled with it a horn tooted peremptorily down the road, and an auto with the imperial banner demanded the way – we were blockading the German emperor on his return. His chauffeur glared murderously, but the Kaiser leaned out from the car and waved his hand reassuringly at our frantic chauffeur. When the road was finally clear and his auto went whirling past, the Kaiser answered our salutations with a military salute.<sup>47</sup>

Oswald Schuette was also on the scene and also mentioned the interplay between the kaiser and Durborough although he did not mention Durborough by name:

The men who surround Emperor William are usually most particular to see that no careless person is around trying to photograph him without special permission. So you can imagine how busy they were when the kaiser went to the east front to help celebrate the fall of Fort Novo Georgievsk. Suddenly a Chicago photographer slipped out of the line and hurriedly set up his moving picture machine within fifty feet of the imperial automobile. Before the outraged officials could interfere the kaiser approached, and the photographer began to operate his machine with intense zeal.

Probably the responsible officers feared to make a scene in the kaiser's presence. Doubtless they thought the intruder could be executed later with less noise. Yet the kaiser might take things into his own hands, and then there would be real trouble.

So they stood breathless while the imperial chauffeur guided his auto within five feet of the offending camera. Suddenly the kaiser spied the moving picture man. A gasp from the worried officers and then –  
The kaiser smiled and made a fine military salute squarely into the lens of the camera.

There was a sigh of relief, for the imperial salute was certainly a sign of approval and the camera man was saved.<sup>48</sup>

If filming the kaiser at Novo Georgievsk was the climax of Durborough's trip, it could be said that the capture of Warsaw and the fortresses surrounding it were the high point of the eastern campaign for Germany. After Warsaw, the Russians continued their methodical retreat eastward. As Norman Stone said, "Every day the Russians would retire three miles or so, construct a new line, and wait for the Germans to stumble towards it; then a new phase of the retreat would begin."<sup>49</sup> As they advanced, the Germans found fewer and fewer decent roads. They were also approaching the Pripet Marshes, a very difficult area in which to maneuver at any time. In addition, autumn was coming and with it the *rasputitsa*, the period in the spring and fall when the Russian roads become a sea of mud. General Ludendorff still wanted to advance into Russia, but Erich von Falkenhayn, the Chief of Staff, who remembered Napoleon, was more than happy with a German line reaching from Riga to Baranovichi to Pinsk to Dubno to Czernowitz. Essentially all of Poland was in German or Austro-Hungarian hands. It was time for Durborough and Ries to go home.

# Homeward Bound

After returning to Berlin from the eastern front, Durborough and Ries had one more short trip in the Stutz to the western front. Driving back to Berlin through the mountains, Durborough wrote with emotion some thirty years later of the near loss of the auto and all their gear. They were pressing through a hard rain on slick muddy clay roads when they rounded a curve and came to an ominous steep grade with a sheer drop on the left that curved right at the bottom. They rigged a long drag anchor by attaching a log to the rear axle with a tow rope. Ries rode the log down “digging in his heels” providing the necessary braking until just before the curve when the rope broke and the car surged forward in the slick clay mud. Durborough relates:

“Just when the good old Stutz with all our stuff aboard was within about five feet of the edge of the cliff, I muttered a prayer, and jumped. I had turned my back. I began to cry. My nerves were all shot. I had rigged that car up just the way I wanted it. I had traveled in it, I had brought it along all the way from Chicago, thousands of miles. It was my pal, I had grown so accustomed to its every whim, that it seemed like an old friend. I had left it once chained to a tree in a woods up in Poland. I had burned out the clutch, trying to get across a sandy stretch of country. Several weeks later, there it was, still chained to the tree, and not a thing missing. I had repaired it and we had taken to the road again. No I couldn’t bear to see it go slipping over that cliff. I sunk down on my knees in the mud, with my hands over my eyes.”<sup>50</sup>

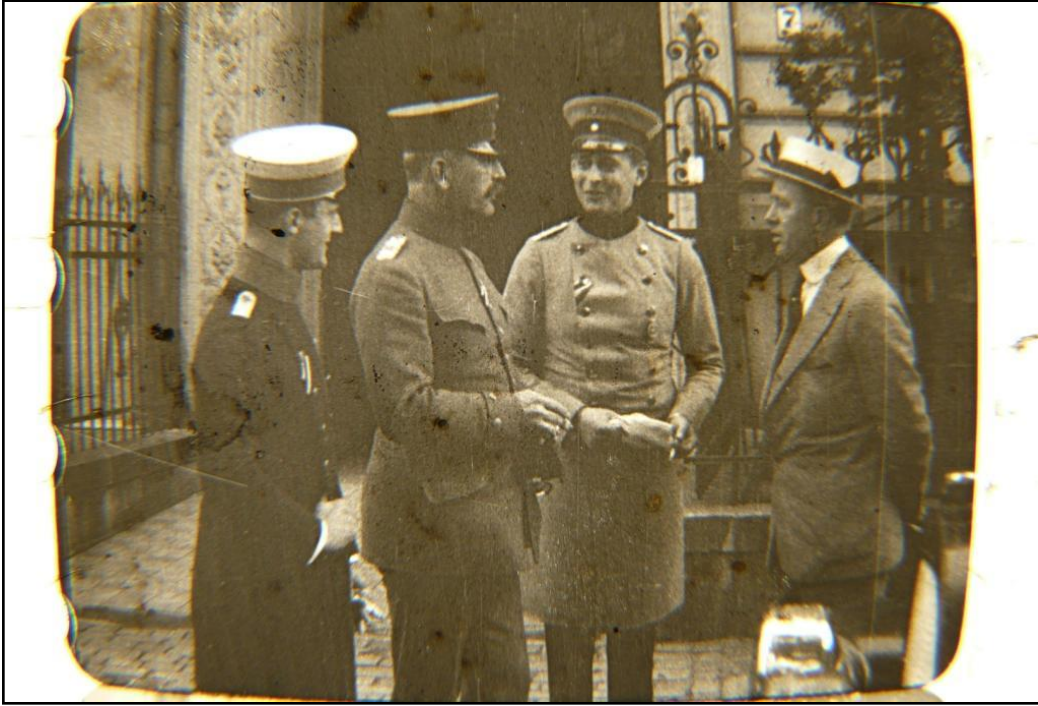
When Ries caught up with him, he brought Durborough out of his daze by telling him the car remained hanging right on the edge. They found a local farmer with a team of horses who got the car back on the road and on their way. However impractical and burdensome the car was financially and logistically, it had clearly served him well not only for transportation but in attracting attention. This manuscript section written years later reveals just how emotionally attached he had become to his Stutz Bearcat roadster and possibly the cumulative physical and mental stresses endured during his war film correspondence. Just as telling is the observation his manuscript has no similarly emotional passage about any person, not even his assistant Ries.



Back in Berlin there was little time to finish processing the exposed film, have it reviewed by the censors, pack up and leave for home. In his manuscript, Durborough accounted for his film stock and wrote about his experience with the film censors. He had purchased 25,000 feet of negative film stock in New York just prior to leaving for Europe. He entered Germany with a little over 24,000 feet, having exposed some on the trip over. In Germany he printed a little over 22,000 feet for review by the censors at a Berlin movie studio, having tossed out some and keeping 400 feet for filming on the trip home. He claims the censors initially were going to allow him to take only 6300 feet home from Germany, a pronouncement he didn't take passively.<sup>51</sup>

Preemptively just before he was to meet with the censors for their verdict, Durborough had organized an evening party at the Adlon Hotel to view nearly all of the film he had submitted for review. It went from 7 to midnight with a break at 9, followed by a supper and dancing from 1 a.m. into the wee hours. He invited all his German civilian and military friends and acquaintances, those he had filmed, those who had assisted him and anyone one else important or owed a favor. These included several General Staff officers and Foreign Office officials, one of whom introduced him to the audience.

Prince Max of Baden, whom Durborough had met, filmed and established a friendship with during his time in Germany, attended the party. He frequented the Adlon Hotel and was in the tea garden when Durborough returned dejected and angry from his meeting with the censors. He explained the situation to Prince Max and appealed for his help. Durborough claims Prince Max immediately left to make some calls and returned to assure him there would be another review by the censors and he would be sitting with the Board of Censors himself. He also assured him of a more favorable result. Durborough had to delay his ship departure for a few days while this second review was done. His contemporary interviews about the film back in Chicago note he returned with 16,000 feet which is consistent with his feature film length of 8,500 feet assuming a roughly 50% film editing for this type feature and the period.<sup>52</sup>



**Figure 29. Durborough (right), received by Prince Reuss of the General Staff, Prince Max von Baden (second from left) and Count von Bernstorff, son of the German ambassador to the U.S.A.**

Ries was sent ahead by train to Rotterdam with the film negatives because the Stutz was fully loaded with other baggage. Durborough left Berlin a little later with Walter Niebuhr covering the last of his 10,000 miles in Europe as he drove out through the Brandenburg Tor side arch, the Tiergarten, Grunewald and Wannsee before they fastened their chin straps, pulled down their goggles, and accelerated to 75 mph.<sup>53</sup> When the SS *Nieuw Amsterdam* left Rotterdam on the evening of September 18th, he had been assured that his film and car, as on the trip to Europe, were not on the manifest and safely hidden to avoid problems with the British inspection near Falmouth. After a few smooth days at sea they encountered stormy weather for most of the remaining voyage before arriving in New York harbor on 30 September.<sup>54</sup>

Needing to deal with US Customs, they spent a night in New York City at the Roosevelt Hotel. Durborough found his colleague Edwin Weigle, the *Chicago Tribune's* war cinematographer who had returned from Germany a few weeks earlier, hosting his film *The German Side of the War* at a local theater.<sup>55</sup> Durborough claims that F. Ziegfeld, Jr., who was managing the New York City showing of

Weigle's film, contacted him to propose a similar deal for hosting his film. Durborough informed him he could only present his proposal to the War Film Syndicate back in Chicago. Of more concern to Durborough was a phone call with his Editor Sam Hughes about a Federal Agent in Chicago urgently trying to meet him about some important matter involving Ries.<sup>56</sup> The matter was indeed urgent. The British newspapers had announced that a spy named Irving Guy Ries was to be executed at the Tower of London on 27 October 1915.

What had transpired was this: the Germans had obtained possession of Ries' passport in order to provide him with a visa when he was to accompany Durborough to Germany. But while it was in their possession, they must have decided that since Ries was not very well known, they could get away with copying his passport in order to provide a forged copy to one of their agents, which they promptly did. The false Ries traveled to London and then applied in London for a visa to Rotterdam. The American vice-consul in London noticed that the passport appeared to be a forgery, and notified the police. The British arrested the phony Ries as a spy. Meanwhile, the Department of Justice opened their investigation into the matter and the story was picked up in the American newspapers. In the middle of this, Durborough and the genuine Ries arrived back from Germany, totally confused about what had happened. Once they got back to Chicago, it was all eventually sorted out, and the department of Justice dropped its investigation of Durborough and Ries.

But leaving the ludicrous part aside, the Germans appear to have destroyed a lot of the advantage they might have gained from screening the film in America. Although Germany wanted to have Americans showing the German side of the war, portraying its citizens bravely coping with the difficulties of the war both on the home front and in the field, it was revealed they were stealing the identity of Americans for espionage purposes, including those like Ries, whom they had invited themselves. In fact, the Germans forged rather a lot of passports and had even set up a special office in America to accomplish this, apparently with the connivance of Ambassador von Bernstorff.<sup>57</sup> It was revealed once again, shortly after the Albert briefcase incident of 24 July 1915 and before the Zimmermann telegram of 1917, that whatever Germany might say, its intentions towards America were far from friendly. And it kept getting caught.

## Back in the United States

Once Durborough satisfied Customs and the film had been express shipped to Chicago, he and Ries sped to Philadelphia for lunch with Durborough's parents at a local hotel before continuing on to spend the night at Pittsburgh. They went on to Cleveland to meet with Sam Hughes for lunch and got to Chicago the following day. Upon arriving back in Chicago, Durborough claims crowds swarmed them when he stopped to greet a friend with his Stutz now covered in European hotel decals and the signatures of many soldiers and civilians acquired while in Germany. He briefly visited his former colleagues at the *Chicago Examiner* before proceeding a few blocks north to the Syndicate's office in the Mallers Building where Carl M. Marston greeted him.<sup>58</sup> Marston appears to have been the active Syndicate manager and the individual Durborough worked with most closely upon his return.<sup>59</sup>



**Figure 30. Cameramen from Rothacker Film Studio, Chicago, with Durborough's Stutz. He probably stopped by in October 1915 to have his war film developed and printed. Courtesy Buckey Grimm.**

The announcement of the Durborough film noted the film's local connections, Chicagoans Wilbur H. Durborough and *Daily News*' own correspondent Oswald F. Schuette. Shortly after Durborough's return to Chicago, the paper featured an interview with him accompanied by a photo of Schuette with Durborough in the Stutz Bearcat roadster. The article covered some of his personal experiences while in Germany and also included his tribute to its Berlin office: "It is like a branch consular office to Americans ....", and to Schuette: "He is popular with all classes, official and private, and has the confidence of those in highest position. His friendship was valuable to me in my task of getting real war pictures...."

For Durborough, as he acknowledged in his praise, the key to obtaining access to the war zone was likely Schuette, who spoke fluent German, understood the German culture, and clearly had developed very good contacts in the Foreign Office. As noted earlier, Jane Addams attributed him with obtaining meetings with the Chancellor and Foreign Minister on very short notice. Later, H. L. Mencken, only recently back from the front when the U.S. broke diplomatic relations, would credit Schuette for getting approval within a day from General Ludendorff out at the front, the only one who could waive the military restriction on his leaving the country so soon with Ambassador Gerard's train. As an additional tribute, Durborough inserted an intertitle with Schuette's greetings to friends back home in the Stutz repair scene of the Chicago film and as already described, a similar one in the first film showing in Milwaukee where Schuette had also worked as a newspaperman: "The American camp. Mr. Schuette, of the Chicago *Daily News*, is some mechanic as well as one of the best newspapermen I have ever met." No documentation has yet been found but one might also surmise Schuette was not only helpful to Durborough in getting his "real war pictures" but may have been the critical link for the *Daily News*' sponsorship of its early Chicago presentation. Yet whatever his role in facilitating Durborough's access to film in the war zone or the *Daily News*' Chicago sponsorship for the film, Lawson's announcement labeling the film as the "Durborough-Schuette pictures" greatly exaggerated Schuette's role. There is no indication he participated in any part of the actual filming or film production process; that appears to have all been done by Durborough with Ries' assistance. But while Schuette's influence behind the scenes in obtaining sponsorship back home may have been important, there is little doubt his influence in Germany was the critical difference that enabled Durborough, far more than Albert K. Dawson and Edwin F. Weigle, to enjoy the support of the Foreign Office and the German Army for access to the front lines for filming.



Durborough's film first opened in Milwaukee on 28 November 1915 for an eight-day run before moving to Chicago's Fine Arts Theater on Monday, 6 December 1915, starting its longest run anywhere. Factors contributing to this record were the *Daily News*' substantial ad campaign, Chicago's large German-American population and the film's reputation being quickly established as the best war film to date with Kitty Kelly's early enthusiastic review, even though Ms. Kelly worked for the *Chicago Tribune*, a competitor of the *Chicago Daily News*. Durborough lectured at every performance during the *Daily News*' sponsorship which concluded on Christmas Day as did its sponsored French war film. His lectures continued during the film showings now managed by the War Film Syndicate in the LaSalle Theater from 27 December 1915 until 10 January 1916, when the LaSalle continued showing the film with ads using the generic title "Wilbur H. Durborough's German War Pictures."



**SEE**  
The Fall of Novo Georgeiewsk!  
A Battle a Week Long!  
Ripping Trenches with Big Shells!  
Capturing 85,000 Russians!  
Von Hindenburg's Great Drive!  
Seven Months of Campaigning!  
Charging the Enemy!  
The Kaiser at the Front!!

**Storming  
the Big  
Russ  
Forts!**

The Chicago Daily News Presents  
**On the Firing  
Line with the  
Germans!**  
The Motion Picture Scoop of the War!!

8000 Feet of Thrilling Films just brought from battle-fronts by Wilbur H. Durborough, war photographer, who took them in collaboration with Oswald H. Schuette, the Daily News War Correspondent with the German Army.

All day Monday the latest struggles of the Great War raged in all their fury before thrilled thousands at the Fine Arts Theater! Great crowds waited in line till late!! Go to-day—see the last seven months of momentous events roll away before you—Von Hindenburg's Gigantic Drive at the Heart of Russia—The Crushing German Charges—Feroocious Russian Resistance—Great Battle-fields and Forts Aflame with Shell-Fire and Thousands Fighting with Monster Engines of Destruction!!

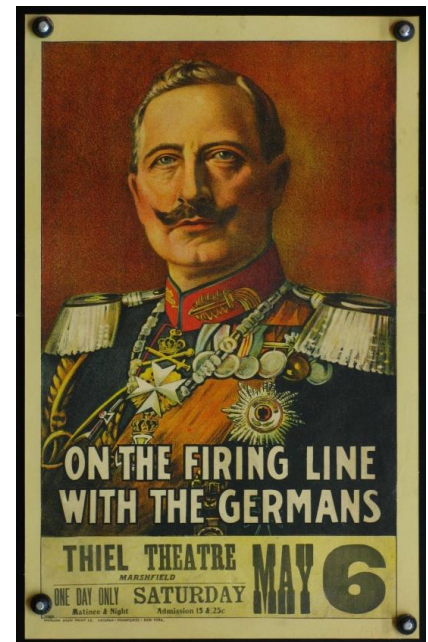
See the Climax—a Week of Assaults on Novo Georgeiewsk, Declared Impregnable!! You'll never forget!!!

Mr. Durborough Lectures at Every Performance  
WEEK DAYS 11 A. M. TO 11 P. M.  
**FINE ARTS THEATER**  
Michigan Avenue, Near Van Buren St. **ADMISSION 25 CENTS** These Pictures Will Not Be Shown on Sunday

Figure 31. Advertisement, Chicago Tribune, 7 December 1915

Durborough's film played in local movie theaters around the US beginning in 1916. One film showing of special interest to Durborough was sponsored by the *North American* in Philadelphia, the city where his parents and brother still lived, in February 1916. He traveled east by train to visit with his family and arranged for the Stutz roadster to arrive later on another. With his typical promotional flair, Durborough drove it up and down Chestnut Street firing a big gun before parking it in front of the movie house when he lectured at each show. While he was no doubt warmly received by his family, his film was not so well received by the Pennsylvania State Board of Censors. It had a legal mandate to review and prohibit the showing of "[films, reels or views] as are sacrilegious, obscene, indecent or such as tend, in the judgment of the board, to corrupt morals. This section does not apply to announcement or advertising slides."

After reviewing the submitted film, the Board of Censors delivered its verdict requiring 75 feet of film removed just days before the scheduled opening on 7 February 1916. They censored the portraits of von Hindenburg and the kaiser that appeared near the very end of the film fearing the large portrait views might incite demonstrations resulting in a riot in a mixed audience of German and English sympathizers. They also forbade using 2'x3' posters of these individuals' portraits for promoting the film by claiming they were false advertising since von Hindenburg and the kaiser wouldn't actually be appearing in person. The immediate verbal protest to the Board was ignored. Although a few weeks later it was determined the Board acted wrongly, there was insufficient time to appeal the ruling at the time; the posters were confiscated and the 75 feet of film were removed before the initial Philadelphia showing.<sup>60</sup>



**Figure 32. The controversial kaiser poster, banned in Philadelphia, but welcomed in Marshfield, Wisconsin. Courtesy Hershenson-Allen Archive (eMoviePoster.com)**

The film bookings slowed through the second half of 1916 into 1917 until public interest in German war films quickly evaporated after diplomatic relations were severed with Germany and the country headed toward declared war on 6 April. The local newspapers that wrote articles about the film and Durborough's frequent appearances generally merely

noted the fact he introduced the film and then described some film content, usually mentioning the several Kaiser family appearances, scenes from local Berlin city life, the impressive German military drive, the totally destroyed fort of Novo Georgievsk and possibly the suffering refugees. While the movie content is certainly pro-German and Durborough made the best use of his opportunity to document the story of the German side of the war and the successful eastern front offensive campaign, his motivation appears to have been that of a film reporter, not a propagandist, much like his film project investors who considered the project as a good financial investment opportunity.

However that isn't necessarily the case for another film tour he did in the fall of 1916. In 1916 Robert W. Woolley was the Publicity Chairman of the Democratic Campaign Committee responsible for directing President Wilson's reelection publicity campaign and the one credited for the campaign slogan, "He Kept Us out of War." As Publicity Chairman, he was interested in exploiting film and the film industry for political purposes to a greater extent than any previous national campaign. Many political and film historians know President Wilson spoke before nearly 1,000 people including most of the reigning film moguls at a Motion Picture Board of Trade banquet in New York City on 27 January 1916. Woolley noticed Durborough's war film and conceived and secretly paid for a fall 1916 film tour in a few selected states to hopefully tip the balance for Wilson's re-election. He approached Durborough through NEA editor Sam Hughes and commissioned Durborough to assemble a film emphasizing the horrors of war in Europe and the troubles in Mexico and to introduce each show by describing the film, giving his personal witness to the horrors of war he experienced while filming and concluding with strong support for President Wilson's position of keeping the country out of these conflicts. But to be effective, Woolley wanted the presentation to appear as though from an unbiased, independent film journalist and to keep the DCC's relationship with the project hidden.

Durborough created a film titled *With Durborough on the Firing Line* composed from parts of his film taken on the eastern front, a little taken on the western front augmented with other sourced film, and some Mexican film he took when covering Pershing's Spring 1916 Punitive Expedition augmented with some Vera Cruz film almost certainly from Weigle's *Battle of Vera Cruz* and possibly other sourced material. It was presented at brief stops for a day or so in theaters bought out on short notice with payments to compensate for any losses due to prior film bookings. The shows were staged only in cities

of states judged by Woolley to be closely contested between Charles Evans Hughes, the Republican Party candidate, and President Woodrow Wilson. Durborough mentions opening the tour in Portland and a few other cities in Maine, followed by Boston, New York and Ohio, with Pennsylvania skipped for political reasons. He also hosted a showing in his native state of Delaware. He introduced each show with his remarks concluding with an endorsement to Wilson's policy of keeping the U.S. out of the war.

The *Daily Kennebec Journal* articles at the start of the film tour described Durborough only as "the famous war correspondent on special commission by the Scripps-McCrea league of newspapers" with no hint of any political connection. As agreed with Woolley, he was speaking out as a witness to the human toll of war:

This interesting man said that he felt 10 years older since going to Europe and that now there were more grey hairs in his head than in his father's. To visit the war hospitals and see the wounded is a sight to long be remembered. Along with the maimed ones there are so many who have gone totally blind. Many have gone crazy with fear, strong men all shot in pieces and human wrecks, all caused by the horrors of war. ....<sup>61</sup>

In his manuscript, Durborough claimed that when NEA Editor Sam Hughes sounded him out about his views, he said he had voted for Wilson in 1912 although he and his family were traditionally Republicans and that he planned to vote for him again. His film introductory comments reported in the newspapers about the horrors of war appear consistent with what he witnessed and filmed. He may very well have been entirely truthful in his comments and endorsement of Wilson. However the fact remains that it was not made known that his film and tour were sponsored by the Democratic Campaign Committee which tainted his appearance as an independent journalist.

In late 1917 Durborough was recruited to support George Creel's Committee on Public Information (CPI). After an initial two months training, Durborough accepted a First Lieutenant's commission in the U.S. Army Signal Corps Reserves in November. In Creel's 1918 budget he listed Lieutenants Durborough and Edwin F. Weigle as two of his five Road Camera Men, the other three being civilians. In August of 1918 Durborough was promoted to Captain and honorably discharged on 31 January 1919. Durborough would later describe his army service as "photographic propaganda".



**Figure 33. Captain Wilbur H. Durborough at his desk at U.S. Signal Corps Headquarters, Washington, D.C., 29 January 1919.  
From the collection of the National Archives, Washington, D.C.**

During his time in service, he produced a short film at Ft. Lewis, Washington, to demonstrate how the troops there would defend against an attack. This clearly wasn't a training film but intended to support Creel's purpose of convincing others the U. S. Army was well prepared for war. As he did in his 1915 film, he followed a story line. Initially troops are seen relaxing and visiting with family until the alert comes via semaphore and phone, then troops are mustered and deployed, followed by escalating displays of camouflaged infantry and artillery counterattack and concluding with evacuating and treating the wounded. Durborough appears to have believed it important for war film credibility to include casualties, real or staged. When writing in his manuscript about filming the phony truck train attack he filmed in Mexico in 1916, he especially noted to Captain Hunter how real it looked by having "a few of the boys carried out on stretchers to a first aid station, bandages on their head and everything." While on the west coast in Washington, Durborough also took some Seattle area shipyard film with fellow officer Lt. Edward N. Jackson after they arrived too late and missed their assignment to film the launching of the *General Pershing*.



## Subsequent History of Durborough and the Film

Upon leaving the army, Captain Durborough didn't continue his prior career in film or photojournalism. A promotional opportunity for a newly organized company presented itself to parlay his command experience into a corporate position that would employ his natural talents in promotion and publicity. In 1919 the Savold Tire Company was organized in New York City based on a newly patented process for recapping worn tires much less expensively than previous methods. It was structured to license the patent to local state or regional independent Savold operating companies that would actually rebuild the tires. The company negotiated with Durborough to join as the general field manager and conduct the first serious public test by driving the Stutz Bearcat roadster he took to Germany on tires rebuilt in Savold's Chicago factory on a long promotional tour. It consisted of driving some 3500 miles from Chicago to New York City including an initial 2200 in Michigan, Ohio and Canada. The Chicago Auto Club president certified the test by placing seals on the tires at the early July start and checking them again at the finish. Except for one tire being "cemented to keep down lacerations from a ten-foot plunge into a ditch to avoid collision near Detroit", the original tires with the same air arrived August 1st in New York. Durborough, a ticketed speeder, appears to have given the tires a substantial test. After this initial publicity stunt, Durborough relocated his family to New York City and continued working as publicity and public relations director for Savold. But this position, like many earlier ones, was very brief. In post war 1919 the stock market began a frothy rise toward the Great Crash of 1929. One of the first major stock manipulation schemes of this period involved the Savold Tire Company. A large number of financial press stories touting the investment opportunities in the many local operating companies' shares caused their value to soar. The few insiders who had bribed financial journalists for these favorable articles reaped quick fortunes before an equally rapid stock collapse in 1921 when the company suspended operations. Durborough appears to have been an unwitting participant and might have initially believed his efforts had contributed to the rapid rise in the company's fortunes.

A decade after leaving Philadelphia, Durborough now returned there to work as photography manager and art director of the *Evening Bulletin* from 1921 to 1926. But his entrepreneurial spirit moved him to strike out on his own once again in 1927 when he established the Philadelphia Pictorial News Company. This new business venture disintegrated with the Great Crash of 1929 and the growing Depression. He

had spent his money as fast as he earned it, never saving for or worrying much about the future. But he found for the first time that with the Depression he faced a situation that sorely tested even his optimistic outlook and persuasive personality. By mid-1930 he was struggling as a medicine salesman and his home in the Philadelphia suburbs went to sheriff's sale in December 1931. As he struggled through the middle of the Depression as an independent businessman pitching creative advertising for radio, the financial strain finally reached a breaking point in 1936. His wife Molly moved west with their young son Robert to live with her family. At some point during the Depression his much-loved Stutz Bearcat was sold at a Cleveland auction after being stored in a suburban Cleveland barn by the NEA. One hopes that it resides with a collector somewhere.

Durborough continued to struggle through the onset of World War II until America's entry into the war brought an expanding war economy with increased employment opportunities. In the summer of 1942 he moved to Utah to reconcile with his family in Ogden and obtain a civilian personnel position at the Hill Field Army Air Base. He quickly found he couldn't adjust to living at the high altitude which made him physically ill and in the summer of 1943 he managed to transfer to a position at the San Bernardino Army Air Base in California. In 1945 he left this position to work for the independent air base Civilian Employees' Association and also do some advertising and promotion consulting for local businesses. But again and for the last time this career move was cut short when he died suddenly in San Bernardino on 4 April 1946 at the age of 63.

Prior to his death, Durborough started a writing project intended to be a memoir of his earlier life which he never finished. Initially it appears he drafted short sections about an important episode or part of an episode during his career consisting of 4 to 7 typewritten pages. He wrote them as contemporary conversational dialogs, streams of thought or reflection, likely modified consciously or subconsciously to enhance his role. It appears he wasn't attempting to write it as carefully documented history and it doesn't appear he was working from personal contemporary diaries. Rather he was writing to tell the story of his exciting life and experiences as a photojournalist and cinematographer.

Although his manuscript now residing in the Manuscript Collection of Library of Congress often only uses last names with misspellings and many vague date references, typos and two section 13s, all the major

historical events described and most named participants can be documented with research. This material adds historical substance to Durborough's life and reveals new insights such as the Democratic Campaign Committee's secret funding for his fall 1916 film tour. At some point, it appears he decided to change course and write a more interesting novel featuring his alter ego "Bill Randall" as protagonist. He had only drafted 75 mostly handwritten pages of this fictionalized version of his early experience as a young man working on the SS *Minnesota* before he died. But most of Bill Randall's early life appears directly based on Durborough's personal life experiences. In this section, he invented a visit with a fortune teller in Philadelphia shortly before Randall knew of the opportunity to crew on the SS *Manatawa* (SS *Minnesota*) that foretold in as simple a summary of Wilbur H. Durborough's real life as might be written:

"You go many places very far away. You go in much danger. No harm come to you. You will be old man. You go more and more places all over the many seas and many countries. You marry girl long way off. You have two children, one girl, one boy. You have happy life, then unhappy life, then in end happy again."

There has been a happy ending for the Durborough film as well. In 2015, the Library of Congress was able to reassemble, restore and digitize the film, including most of the shots that were missing from the original nitrate film at the Library.<sup>62</sup> The restored film was shown with a musical accompaniment at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in Pordenone, Italy in October 2015. In November 2016, the Library of Congress released the film online, making the movie available for the public domain after almost one hundred years. The authors cannot thank enough Lynanne Schweighofer, George Willeman and the rest of the staff of the Motion Pictures, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division of the Library of Congress for their continuing efforts on the film's behalf.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> H.L. Mencken, *35 Years of Newspaper Work: A Memoir, by H. L. Mencken*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 65

<sup>2</sup> *Chicago Daily News*, (16 October 1915)

<sup>3</sup> "Bericht über die Reise ausländischer Journalisten nach westdeutsche Industriestädten" (25 April - 2 May 1915), transl. Ron van Dopperen, Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, Freiburg (RM 3/10349). The report mentions Dawson only stayed in Hannover and then returned to Berlin.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel*, (New York: Basic Books 2014), 161, in general, 161-181.

<sup>5</sup> Annie Lehr de Waal, "A Trip through East-Prussia", (First report), *Maasbode*, 14 July 1915, evening edition, 1. Transl. Ron van Dopperen.

<sup>6</sup> "Bericht über die Reise Ausländischer Journalisten nach dem deutschen Osten" [10-22 June 1915], Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, Freiburg, RM3/10349.

<sup>7</sup> Lehr de Waal, "A Trip through East-Prussia", (First report), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Lehr de Waal, *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>9</sup> Lehr de Waal, "A Trip through East-Prussia- At Königsberg and Insterburg ", (Second report), trans. Ron van Dopperen, *Maasbode*, 15 July 1915, evening edition, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Lehr de Waal, *Ibid.* 1.

<sup>11</sup> Lehr de Waal, "A Trip through East Prussia - Into Russia ", (Third report), *Maasbode*, trans. Ron van Dopperen, 16 July 1915, evening edition, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Marcus van Blankenstein, "Behind the Eastern Front – Part III," 15. *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, trans. Ron van Dopperen, 4 July 1915, 5.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur G. Abrecht, "Zweiter Besuch an der Front im Osten ," Part I, trans. Cooper C. Graham and Wolfgang Justen, *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, 21 July 1915, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Marcus van Blankenstein, "Behind the Eastern Front – Part III," *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, trans. Ron van Dopperen, 4 July 1915, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Abrecht, "Auf dem Zug nach dem Osten", trans. Cooper C. Graham, *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung, Kriegs-Album*, Vol 1, No. 27, 28 August 1915, p.2.

<sup>16</sup> Prit Buttar, *Germany Ascendant: The Eastern Front 1915*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2015), 86 citing W-R. Osburg, *Hineingeworfen: Der erste Weltkrieg in den Erinnerungen seiner Teilnehmer* (Aufbau, Berlin, 2014), 297.

<sup>17</sup> Blankenstein, *Ibid.* 15.

<sup>18</sup> Blankenstein, *Ibid.* 15.

<sup>19</sup> Lehr de Waal, "A Trip through East Prussia - Into Russia ", (Third report), trans. Ron van Dopperen, *Maasbode*, 16 July 1915, evening edition, 1.



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<sup>20</sup> Lehr de Waal, "A Trip through East Prussia – How the Russians Invaded", (Fourth report), trans. Ron van Dopperen, *Maasbode*, 22 July 1915, evening edition, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur G. Abrecht, "Auf dem Zug nach dem Osten", *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung Kriegs-Album*, (New York: New Yorker Staats-Zeitung, 28 August 1915, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Lehr de Waal, "A Trip through East-Prussia- From Rastenburg to Allenstein ", (Fifth report), trans. Ron van Dopperen, *Maasbode*, 23 July 1915, morning edition, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Lehr de Waal, *Ibid.* 2.

<sup>24</sup> Abrecht, "Auf dem Zug nach dem Osten", 2.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Danziger, "Letter from Berlin for the Illinois Staats-Zeitung," *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, 8 August 1915, 8. Danziger wrote his reports in English.

<sup>26</sup> Danziger, *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Danziger, *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Lehr de Waal, "A Trip through East-Prussia- Tannenberg and Osterode ", (Sixth report), trans Ron van Dopperen, *Maasbode*, 26 July 1915, evening edition, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Grohs appears to be Arthur Grohs. He took some striking pictures of the destruction by the Germans in Lille in 1914, and later, photographed the seedier side of life in Weimar Berlin. He took some especially noteworthy pictures of the Spartacist uprising in Berlin in 1919, and was a well-known press photographer. In the original German article, Abrecht has Grohs speak with a Berliner accent: "Ick jeh zum Marschall", and so forth.

<sup>30</sup> Abrecht, *Ibid.* 3.

<sup>31</sup> The Field Marshal's relationship with the press was not great. In 1938, a Dutch newspaperman remembered: "...after the big victory at Tannenberg, a well - known photographer named Küchlwind was sent to the East, to Insterburg, where Hindenburg was staying, to have his picture taken. Hindenburg vigorously refused to pose in front of his camera. Poor Küchlwind didn't know what to do and finally decided to set up his equipment near the steps that the Field Marshall used when going out for dinner. Hindenburg saw the camera and immediately shouted out in anger to the poor fellow, asking what excuse he thought he had to be there. Looking very pale and frightened, the photographer replied he was only doing his duty. When hearing this Hindenburg's face lightened up. Aha, he was doing his duty! That of course explains the whole situation. If it is indeed his duty to make a photograph, well then we better go ahead." G. Nypels, "Ludendorff en de journalisten", *Algemeen Handelsblad*, trans. Ron van Dopperen, 6 January 1938, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Abrecht, "Auf dem Zug nach dem Osten", 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>34</sup> Lehr de Waal, "A Trip through East-Prussia- Tannenberg and Osterode", (Sixth report) 2.

<sup>35</sup> "Bericht über die Reise Ausländischer Journalisten nach dem deutschen Osten" [10-22 June 1915], trans. Ron van Dopperen, Cooper C. Graham, Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv, Freiburg, RM3/10349, citing *Der Grosse Krieg in Bildern*, Herausgegeben vom Deutschen Überseedienst, Berlin; für den Inhalt verantwortlich: Jos. Schumacher, (Berlin: Georg Stilke, 1915-1918).

<sup>36</sup> For instance, at the beginning of Durborough's and Ries' trip to East Prussia, Durborough inserts an intertitle "Leaving Berlin for the East Front," (19:37) followed by a shot of Durborough in the Stutz accompanied by Walter Niebuhr, and in frame left among a crowd of people saying goodbye, someone who looks like Lewis Marks. But Niebuhr did not go on the trip to East Prussia, although he did go on the later trip to Warsaw and Novo Georgievsk. Niebuhr is easy to spot, being quite tall, slim and

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usually sporting somewhat odd attire like a large floppy white hat with a bill, a cape, and on occasion, aviator's goggles. One assumes that this shot was taken when Marks and Niebuhr left for Warsaw in late July or August.

<sup>37</sup> Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-1917* (London, Penguin Books, 1998), 181; Prit Buttar, *Germany Ascendant*, 293-317

<sup>38</sup> Dennis E. Showalter, *Tannenberg: Clash of Empires*, (Dulles [Virginia]: Brassey's Inc. 2004), 243.

<sup>39</sup> Stone, *The Eastern Front*, 181.

<sup>40</sup> James O'Donnell Bennett, "East from Warsaw with the Germans", *New York Times*, 13 October 1915, 2. The correspondent is not identified, but it is likely to be Bennett.

<sup>41</sup> James O'Donnell Bennett, "Plain of Warsaw is all Desolation", *New York Times*, 14 October 1915, 3. The correspondent is not identified, but it is likely to be Bennett.

<sup>42</sup> Oswald F. Schuette "Sees Hail of Shells on Novo Georgievsk," *Chicago Daily News*, sent 19 August via London, transmitted 23 August 1915)

<sup>43</sup> Walter Niebuhr, *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, 30 September 1915. For General von Beseler's description of the destruction of Fort Dembe, see Carl Siwinna, *Unsere Heeresführer im Weltkrieg 1914/1916*, (Berlin: Phönix-Verlag, 1916) 103.

<sup>44</sup> "Kaiser is War Hero at Novo Georgievsk", *New York Times*, 26 August 1915, 2. The correspondent is not identified but is highly likely to be Bennett.

<sup>45</sup> James O'Donnell Bennett, "The Kaiser Talks to His Army, *Christian Century: A Journal of Religion*, Vol. 32, 8 September 1915, 6-7.

<sup>46</sup> Harry C. Carr, "Capturing the Kaiser", *Photoplay Magazine*, March 1916, 112.

<sup>47</sup> Carr, "Harry Carr's Encounter with the Kaiser: Thrilling Experience on the Russian Front", *Los Angeles Times*, 29 August 1915, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Oswald F. Schuette, "Chicago Movie Man Stuns Kaiser's Guard," *Chicago Daily News*, 11 October 1915; sent from Berlin 10 September 1915.

<sup>49</sup> Stone, *The Eastern Front*, 182.

<sup>50</sup> Wilbur H. Durborough, Durborough Draft Manuscript, Library of Congress Manuscripts Division, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as DDM1), Sec. 22, 3-[5].

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Sec. 28, 4-[5]; Sec. 29, 2-5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Sec. 29, pp. 1-5; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 10 December 1915, p. 15; *Chicago Daily News*, 16 October 1915, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Sec. 30, 3, Sec. 32, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. Sec. 32, 4-5.

<sup>55</sup> Cooper C. Graham and Ron van Doppen, "Edwin F. Weigle, Cameraman for the Chicago Tribune", *Film History*, Vol. 22, 389-407, especially p. 399.

<sup>56</sup> DDM1 Sec. 33, 3-4.

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<sup>57</sup> Reinhard R. Doerries, *Imperial Challenge: Ambassador Count Bernstorff and German American Relations, 1908-1917* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 144-6.

<sup>58</sup> DDM1 Sec. 33, 1-5.

<sup>59</sup> Chicago Press Veterans Association Application, Carl Morton Marston, MSS Collections, Chicago Historical Society; DDM1, Sec. 34, p. 6: "... and Marston here and a group of his friends helped me finance the moving pictures." If Durborough wrote more about the Syndicate, it is now among the missing parts of his manuscript. The existing parts also have nothing written about his participation in this film's editing process or his travels to speak before the film's presentations.

<sup>60</sup> *Philadelphia Evening Ledger*, 5 February 1916, 1; *ibid.* 11 February 1916, 2; *ibid.* 12 February 1916, 1; *ibid.* 27 March 1916, 1.

<sup>61</sup> *Daily Kennebec Journal*, 7 September 1916.

<sup>62</sup> For the story of the research and events which determined the film's content and found film missing from the Library's original nitrate collection, see: Castellan, James W., "Wilbur H. Durborough's Lost and Future 1915 World War I Documentary Film", *Journal of Film Preservation*, 92, 04.2015, pp. 45-51.

bedürfnisse.....M	5539,30
sprech-, Porto- u. Tel. Geb.....M	13493,48
ht-, Rolligelder.....M	3243,38
ungen, Zeitschriften, Broschüren.....M	72290,14
restzungen.....M	4309,09
Photographien, Postkarten.....M	12639,75
are für Zeitungsartikel.....M	2696,35
kosten.....M	5521,55
ntionen.....M	12600,-
ter.....M	12797,81
neine Ausgaben.....M	1234,50
Zusammen	M 146365,35

enn somit sowohl im Berichtsmonat wie im Monat Mai die  
 ügung stehenden M 150 000,- nicht voll aufgebraucht werden  
 sind doch die erzielten Ueberschüsse nur scheinbar vor-  
 Die Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst schuldet sowohl der  
 ckerei wie gewissen Auslandsstellen, die in ihrem Auftrag  
 gasschriften an Ort und Stelle haben herstellen lassen er-  
 Druckkosten, die erst später angefordert werden, für deren  
 ung aber die Mittel bereitgehalten werden müssen,

# Bericht

Über die Reise ausländischer Journalisten nach dem deutschen Osten.

10-22 JUNE 1915

An der Reise haben unter Führung des unterzeichneten Lei-  
 ters der Bilderzentrale teilgenommen:

1. Frau Dr. jur. Annie Lehr geb. de Waal (Holländische Zeitungen)
2. Mrs. Helen Cooper, Frankfurt a/M. (Amerikanische Zeitungen)
3. Herr S. Georg Freund (Amerik. Handelskammer, Berlin)
4. Herr Dr. von Blankenstein (Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant)
5. Herr Dr. Lar Iliescu (Rumänische Zeitungen)
6. Herr Leferty Nicolas Djelepy (Semaia, Athen)
7. Herr Eberlein aus Bern (Schweizer Zeitungen)
8. Herr Pfarrer Bengtson (Schweden)
9. Herr Moussault (Vereenigde Fotobureaux, Amsterdam)
10. Herr Fish de Miranda (Brasilianische Zeitungen)
11. Herr Artur Abrecht (New Yorker Staatszeitung)
12. Herr Danziger (Illinois Staatszeitung)
13. Herr Wilbur H. Durborough (amerikanischer Berichterstatter und Photograph)
14. Herr Ries, dessen Kinoopérateur
15. Herr Schattmann, Kinoopérateur der Eiko-Film-Gesellschaft, Berlin
16. Herr Grohs (Photograph) Berlin.

Es wurden besichtigt: Die Städte Marienburg, Königsberg,  
 Insterburg, Allenstein, Osterode, Thorn und Posen; ferner eine  
 grössere Anzahl der von den Russen verwüsteten Ortschaften, unter  
 anderem Gumbinnen, Pillkallen, Schirwindt, Wladislawow, Wilkowszki,  
 Wirballen, Kibarty, Bydtkuhnen, Stallupönen, Darkehmen, Goldap, Ro-  
 minten, Marggrabowa, Lötzen, Rastenburg, Sensburg, Nicolaiken, Jo-  
 hannisburg, Sorquitten-Mirbach, Bischofsburg, Ortelsburg, Hohenstei-  
 Schlachtfeld von Tannenberg, Meidenburg, Seldau.

Da

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Report on  
 trip to  
 Eastern Front  
 Ref: Durborough/  
 RIES

24 July 1915 by  
 Schumacher, 2fA,  
 Bilderzentrale

RM 3/ 10349

page ①

Also present on this  
 trip a cinematographer  
 of  
 Eiko Newsreel.



Da die Reise zu einem grossen Teil durch das Stappengebiet ging, hatte der stellvertretende Generalstab Herrn Hauptmann von Schneider mit der militärischen Führung beauftragt. Ferner waren beigegeben als Vertreter des Stellvertretenden I. Armeekorps Königsberg, Herr Hauptmann Werner und als Vertreter der Stappeninspektion X Insterburg, Herr Rittmeister Schmidt.

Die Reise war von den in Betracht kommenden Militärbehörden, wie auch von den Zivilverwaltungen sehr gut vorbereitet, sodass den Teilnehmern Gelegenheit geboten wurde, in verhältnismässig kurzer Zeit einen interessanten Einblick in den deutschen Osten zu tun. Eine grosse Erleichterung boten die von der Stappeninspektion Insterburg zur Verfügung gestellten Automobile und die von den örtlichen Kommandos und von den Zivilverwaltungen bis ins Einzelne festgelegten Besichtigungsprogramme mit teilweise sehr interessanten schriftlichen Erläuterungen. Besonderes Verdienst erwarb sich hierbei auch der Oberpräsident der Provinz Ostpreussen, Exzellenz von Batocki, Königsberg durch seine trefflichen Anordnungen.

In den grösseren Städten hatte für Königsberg Herr Oberbürgermeister Dr. Körts die Vorbereitungen getroffen und die Führung durch die Sehenswürdigkeiten zum Teil persönlich übernommen; in Allenstein Herr Oberbürgermeister Zülch, we ausserdem der stellvertretende kommandierende General des XX. Armeekorps, Exzellenz Graf von Schlieffen und der Regierungspräsident von Hellmann sich an dem Empfang der ausländischen Journalisten beteiligten; in Pest Herr Oberbürgermeister Dr. Wilms und mehrere Stadträte, während vom Gouvernement der Festung Posen Herr Major Reiff die Führung durch die militärischen Einrichtungen übernommen, und in Thorn Herr Bürgermeister Dr. Hasse die Besichtigungen vorbereitet hatte. Bei der von Thorn aus erfolgenden Besichtigung verschiedener Ein-

richtungen

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richtungen in Alexandrowo hatte Herr General von der Lanken die Besichtigungen vorbereitet.

Die ausländischen Journalisten ausserten sich mit grosser Befriedigung über die Reise, die nach Mitteilungen der Teilnehmer eine ausserordentlich umfangreiche Ausbeute für redaktionelle Schilderungen geliefert hat. So hat z.B. die holländische Schriftstellerin Frau Dr. Annie Lehr de Waal verschiedene Serien mit 24 Artikeln über den Osten geschrieben, die für holländische Provinzblätter bestimmt waren, während andere Teilnehmer, wie z.B. der Korrespondent des Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant und der Vertreter der New Yorker Staatszeitung je 6 grössere Artikel über die Reise geschrieben haben, die unwillkürlich zu einem Vergleich zwischen den durch den Kampf verursachten Zerstörungen belgischer Orte und dem planlosen Niederbrennen der Russen im deutschen Osten herausfordern musste. Einen tiefen Eindruck hinterliess der Einblick in die bereits lebhaft begonnene landwirtschaftliche Tätigkeit zur Bebauung der Felder und der Wiederbeginn der Bautätigkeit in den zerstörten Ortschaften.

Auch für die Photographen und Kinooperateurs war die Reise durch den Osten, obwohl Photographen dort wiederholt Aufnahmen gemacht hatten, ausserordentlich ergiebig. Ein Teil der Bilder wird in Nummer 7 des grossen Krieg in Bildern erscheinen, während eine grössere Anzahl der Motive für illustrierte Zeitschriften des neutralen Auslandes freigegeben worden ist und eine Anzahl Filmbilder bereits ins Ausland gewandert sind.

Berlin, den 24. Juli 1916

Gen. Schumacher

Report on  
Hrpp to  
Eastern Front  
Ref: busBOROU  
RIES

24 July 1916  
by  
Schumacher

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B. Arch./Kelling

RM 3

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4

26. 5

werden können, falls ihm vom Oberkirchenrat eine Beteiligung an der Propagandatätigkeit gestattet wird. Nach Mitteilung Pfarrer Günthers ist eine sorgfältige Sichtung der norwegischen Adressen erforderlich. Für eine dortige Propaganda wird gegebenenfalls eine Hilfskraft erforderlich sein.

11.) Das Kriegsministerium hat angeregt, die Bildunterschriften des Illustrierten Kriegskurier auch in russischer Sprache anzubringen und mehrere 1000 Exemplare zur Verbreitung an die Kriegsgefangenen zur Verfügung zu stellen. Es ist geantwortet worden, daß der Anregung wegen der Unterschriften stattgegeben würde, daß aber die Zentralstelle nicht mehr als 1000 Exemplare zur Verfügung stellen könne, da ihre Mittel für die Bearbeitung dieses außerhalb ihres eigentlichen Arbeitsfeldes liegenden Gebiets nicht bestimmt seien, sollte das Kriegsministerium die Überlassung einer größeren Anzahl wünschen, so müssen der Bereitstellung von Mitteln von seiner Seite entgegen gesehen werden.

12.) Der Abgeordnete Krsberger empfiehlt einen Vorschlag des Dr. Jany betreffend eine Zusammenstellung aktenmäßig festgestellter Abweichungen der Maßnahmen der kriegführenden Parteien von den bei Kriegsausbruch als geltend anerkannten völkerrechtlichen

Frankfurt am Main.

13.) Referendar Wolgast aus Kiel, ist als Hilfsarbeiter angestellt worden und zwar in erster Linie als Privatsekretär des Generalkonsul Thiel. Ferner hat sich gemeldet der Historiker Hönn aus Mannheim, Herausgeber eines Buches "Der Kampf des Deutschen Geistes im Weltkrieg".

14.) Herr Direktor Schumacher berichtete über die vom 10.-22. Juni dauernde Journalistenreise nach Ostpreußen, Thorn und Posen.

gez. Roediger.

Rm 3/10349

Report 2 fA. 5 July 1915

**RM 3/ 10349**

## **Report on a Trip by Foreign Journalists to the German East**

**[10- 22 June 1915]**

Participants on this trip which was guided by the Director of the Picture Department [Josef Schumacher, ZfA]:

1. Mrs. Dr. Annie Lehr, born de Waal (Dutch newspapers)
2. Mrs. Helen Cooper, Frankfurt am Main (American newspapers)
3. Mr. S. Georg Freund (American Chamber of Commerce, Berlin)
4. Mr. Dr. von [sic] Blankenstein (Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant)
5. Mr. Dr. Lar Iliescu (Romanian newspapers)
6. Mr. Leferty Nicolas Djelepy (Semaia, Athens)
7. Mr. Eberlein from Bern (Swiss newspapers)
8. Mr. Pfarrer Bengtson (Sweden)
9. Mr. Moussault (United Photoburos, Amsterdam)
10. Mr. Fish de Miranda (Brazilian newspapers)
11. Mr. Arthur Albrecht (New Yorker Staatszeitung)
12. Mr. Danziger (Illinois Staatszeitung)
13. Mr. Wilbur H. Durborough (American news reporter and photographer)
14. Mr. Ries, his cinematographer
15. Mr. Schatmann, cinematographer for Eiko Film Company, Berlin
16. Mr. Grohs (photographer), Berlin.

The following locations were visited: the cities of Marienburg, Königsberg, Insterburg, Allenstein, Osterode, Thorn and Posen. Also many communities which have been destroyed by the Russians, such as Gumbinnen, Pillkallen, Schirwindt, Wladislawow, Wilkowyski, Wirballen, Kibarty, Eydtkuhnen, Stallupönen, Darkehmen, Goldap, Rominten, Marggrabowa, Lotzen, Rastenburg,

Senzburg, Nicolaiken, Johannsburg, Sorquitten-Mirbach, Bisschofsburg, Ortelsburg, Hunhenstei, battle field of Tannenberg, Heidenburg, Soldau.

Because the journey for a major part went through the area behind the frontlines [Etappengebiet] the General Staff had assigned Captain von Schneider with the military responsibilities and personal command regarding this trip. He was accompanied by Captain Werner, who represented the First Army Corps at Königsberg, as well as Rittmeister Schmidt who represented the Military Inspection of the area behind the frontline "X. Insterburg".

The journey was well prepared by the military and civilian authorities. As a result, the reporters had the opportunity to see many interesting sights in the German East in a relatively short time. It was a great relief the Military Inspection of "Etappengebiet X. Insterburg" supplied us with cars. The local military authorities and civilian authorities also had prepared a detailed program, which contained interesting documents. Of particular significance was the Provincial Governor of East Prussia, His Excellency von Batocki in Königsberg, because of his excellent directions on this program.

Regarding the major cities: Mayor Dr. Korte of Königsberg had taken care of preparations in this town. He also directed personally part of the program of sight seeing. In Allenstein was Mayor Zulch - there also the Commanding General of the XX. Army Corps, Count von Schlieffen, as well as President von Hellmann, accompanied and welcomed the foreign journalists; in Posen Mayor Dr. Wilma and several members of the city council. Here on behalf of the authorities of the "Festung Posen" Major Reiff guided the reporters while visiting military locations. In Thorn Mayor Dr. Hasse had taken care of all preparations. While going from Thorn to Alexandrowo General von der Lancken had prepared the sight seeings.

The foreign reporters said they were very pleased with this trip. According to the journalists, an extraordinary amount of news stories has been generated as a result of this. As an example, the Dutch reporter Mrs. Annie Lehr de Waal has produced a series of 24 articles on the [German] East, while the reporter of the Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant [van Blankenstein] and the New Yorker Staatszeitung [Albrecht] produced 6 extensive articles on this trip. These inevitably lead to a comparison between the Belgian cities that have been destroyed as a result of the war and the destruction done by the Russians in the German East. The way agriculture is done on the fields and how houses have been rebuilt has made a wonderful impression on the reporters.

Also for the photographers and cinematographers this trip proved to be productive, although photographers have taken pictures in these cities before. Part of these photographs will be published in issue No. 7 of *Der Grosse Krieg in Bilder*, another batch had been released for publication in illustrated magazines in neutral countries abroad. Some of the film footage has already been exported abroad.

*Berlin, 24 July 1915*

s/ Schumacher

## Source:

*Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant [New Rotterdam Courier], 4 July 1915, page 5*

## **Behind The Eastern Front – Part III**

By Our Correspondent [Marcus van Blankenstein]

Berlin, 25 June [1915]

From Pilkallen, we drove to the dead city of Schirwindt. There we witnessed the most horrible things in this awful wasteland. To the south, in the much bigger city of Ortelsburg, there is even more destruction but Schirwindt is completely dead, an absolute ghost town. At one time, it was a modern city with large and well-constructed houses. In the town square we saw the ruins of what used to be a large hotel, with several relics of parts of the central heating system. That's the way people used to live in this city that once had 1500 inhabitants.

Of all houses only one is left standing – one of the oldest and most simple constructions. Apart from that, everything has been burned and destroyed. The church building has also been damaged heavily by shrapnel and grenades. The Russians used that church as a hospital, and after their retreat only a few people went back and entered the city, and those who dared did not enter that holy place. When someone finally got into the church, the remains of a group of dead Russian soldiers were found. The poor devils were probably left behind by their comrades and must have suffered terribly. Even now, no one thinks about entering this city of the dead and explore these ruins. Two guards patrol the streets, but why should they do this? What mischief could anyone do at such a devastated place? Around the church is a park that has a military monument. The Germans buried their dead soldiers at this place. They are all junior officers that have found their final resting place here. Despite of all the desolation all around flowers have been left behind on their graves.

Four months have passed since the Russians were finally driven from this city [*February 9, 1915 – Note RvD*]. What has changed this town since then was done by Mother Nature. One of my friends visited Schirwindt last winter when the destroyed buildings were covered by thick layers of snow. The place looks a lot more green now, but on the sidewalks you can still see the rusty parts of shrapnel. My thoughts go back to the past, over eight months ago, when I was standing on a hill at Wirballen, and together with a group of fellow correspondents I was looking to the north. The fight for Schirwindt was going on and thick smoke blackened the horizon. "This town is taking a heavy beating", one of our military observers said. We kept on looking at the artillery barrage until the Russians fired heavy shells at our hill and we had to look for a safe spot. Now, back at Schirwindt, I can say for sure: our military observer was right when he made that remark.



We are leaving this sad war memorial. Just outside town a small river marks the border with Russia. Once you have crossed it you are in the Russian village of Wladislawof, a place mentioned before in many war reports. But to enter this town isn't easy because the frontier is heavily guarded. Despite of our military guides and the cars that we travel in the whole group of reporters has to show their passports for inspection. Finally, we enter the city which is so much different compared to Schirwindt that is located only a few hundred meters away. The street pavement is - compared to Western European standards - so primitive. It's beyond any comparison, really. A thick layer of dirt covers the street stones and has turned these hilly streets into a horrible mess. The Germans have dug up the stones and used this material to construct some remarkable barricades. The houses are mostly made out of wood over here, and all of them basically look like a shed. Above these wooden constructions two churches can be seen – a Roman Catholic and a Protestant one – that mark a distinct contrast to the slum that has been built inside this town. The people at Wladislawof seem to have adapted to their new regime quite easily. Pretty young Jewish girls laugh at us in a very enticing way. The Russians, they all greet us most politely. We visit a tea house, but once inside we don't feel any urge to have a drink. On the counter we see a dried herring that has been baked and that seems to attract all flies in the city of Wladislawof. This herring will always be one of my most distasteful memories of the war. Still, these tea houses are a true paradise for soldiers who have just been in the firing lines. Under these circumstances, it's best to be modest and have an open mind, I guess. In Wladislawof as well quite a number of houses have been burnt down, but the town doesn't seem to have been that much damaged. It remains a mystery why all of these wooden houses haven't been destroyed as a result of fire.

We next go south-east, all of us uninvited guests of the Czar of Russia. The rain has improved the condition of the roads because the dirt has been washed away, and there is no dust any longer. At least, that's what the people say who are inside the first car that our group of correspondents travels in. Me however, I am in the last car which has number 7! There's a thick fog covering the roads, and our driver frequently has to stop in order to look for directions. Gushes of wind sometimes blow away the fog, but at least it's possible to drive on these roads. At some places the Germans have cut down trees and used the trunks to improve the roads. This all reminds us of last winter, as well as the broad trails alongside these roads that were used by the Russians during their hasty retreat. Other signs of the Winter Offensive are also there, such as military cars that were destroyed by incoming artillery shots. During our trip so far we have seen a few Russian prisoners of war at work on the fields. Nobody seemed to be worried about them escaping. There is hardly any guard around. Now at this sector of the Eastern Front more Russian prisoners of war appear within sight. One thing these Russians all have in common. All of them seem to have sworn an oath not to spill a drop of sweat while working for the Germans. They all work very slowly and seem to need a lot of time to contemplate what they are doing. Meeting our group, when we pass them by, makes for a welcome change in their daily routine, and the Russians all smile at us. Although most of them don't look particularly intelligent, these men do



represent a fine type of human beings – all strong and healthy men with a kind and friendly look in their eyes.

At Wilkowsky we reach the most eastern part of our journey. The town is one of the most prosperous looking cities of the German-Russian border district. It has a large marketplace where Russian prisoners of war are busy constructing a memorial for German soldiers that have been killed in action. There are lots of merry looking people walking on the streets: soldiers, Jews and young girls, all of them seem to have no unfriendly feelings towards the German occupation. Everywhere we see shops and casinos for the officers, as well as various types of places for amusement that attract many customers.

The time has come to go back west. Very soon, we enter a different kind of countryside with fields that are still being farmed. Alongside the roads, the Germans have arranged for vegetable gardens where Russian prisoners are working on the field. An officer proudly wants to show us the land where spinach and salad is grown for the Fatherland, but instead we have to go and visit a different place where farmers – both German and Russian – are working on the fields. We move on again and approach Wirballen where we see a mill. This spot has a special place in my memory because this is where the Russian artillery delivered to me my baptism of fire. For a civilian like me, this will always remain something special. The landscape looks so peaceful now at this clear summer evening. When war came to this country so many shells turned over the soil, but despite of this the city of Wirballen didn't suffer much. Did the Russians have a guardian angel, perhaps? If you look at the place you would think that a barrage of grenades must have turned these houses into ruins immediately. I know that many grenades fell into the streets of Wirballen, but we see no signs of destruction on our trip through this city any longer.

The same doesn't apply to the Russian village "K" that we reach after leaving Wirballen. We visit a small prisoners of war camp at this place. And we seem to have arrived at exactly the right moment. The Russian prisoners of war have just assembled for their evening prayers. They all stand in line, as if they are on a parade. A Russian junior officer – a magnificent fellow – is their commander. He sometimes speaks in German and does so very well. First, the soldiers put away their caps. Then the prisoners start singing – a typical Russian melody – that sounds wonderful during this silent evening. Some prisoners sing along mechanically, others perform a ritual with a great sense of passion. They bow deeply and make the sign of the Holy Cross. After this ceremony has ended we are all surprised by someone in our own company. Among our group of reporters there's an American movie man. He asks the Russians to repeat their prayers: he would very much like to film this scene! I am telling this story because it so typical for these American business men. To these people, this whole war apparently is nothing but a chance to make big movie drama out of it – a spectacle that they can watch and enjoy from a professional point of view. At Pilkallen, this same man recorded a film scene showing a group of marching infantry men. While making this movie, he had a problem cranking his film camera and shouted at the commanding officer the only German

word that he knew: *“Ein Moment!”* We all had a lot of fun hearing him say that. The officer didn’t comply with his wishes and had his soldiers march on. This kind of disrespect for the rights of a cinematographer was something the American couldn’t understand at all. It was by the way one of the few moments when he didn’t get what he wanted.

At “K”, the American’s wishes also weren’t fulfilled but the commanding officers of the POW camp found something to distract him. He ordered the Russians to come back and asked them for volunteers to perform a folklore dance. Yes, who could dance? Laughing out loud, the very best dancers among these soldiers got pushed forward to turn up. Shy and hesitant at first, they started to dance to the music of harmonicas. It was a nice group of men, especially because they seemed to enjoy themselves that much. “With all pleasure, I would make a band of brothers out of this group and join them in battle!”, he [the American cinematographer] said. I have to agree with him, it was a splendid selection of soldiers. Nowhere else at the front did I see Russian soldiers who made such a lasting impression on me.

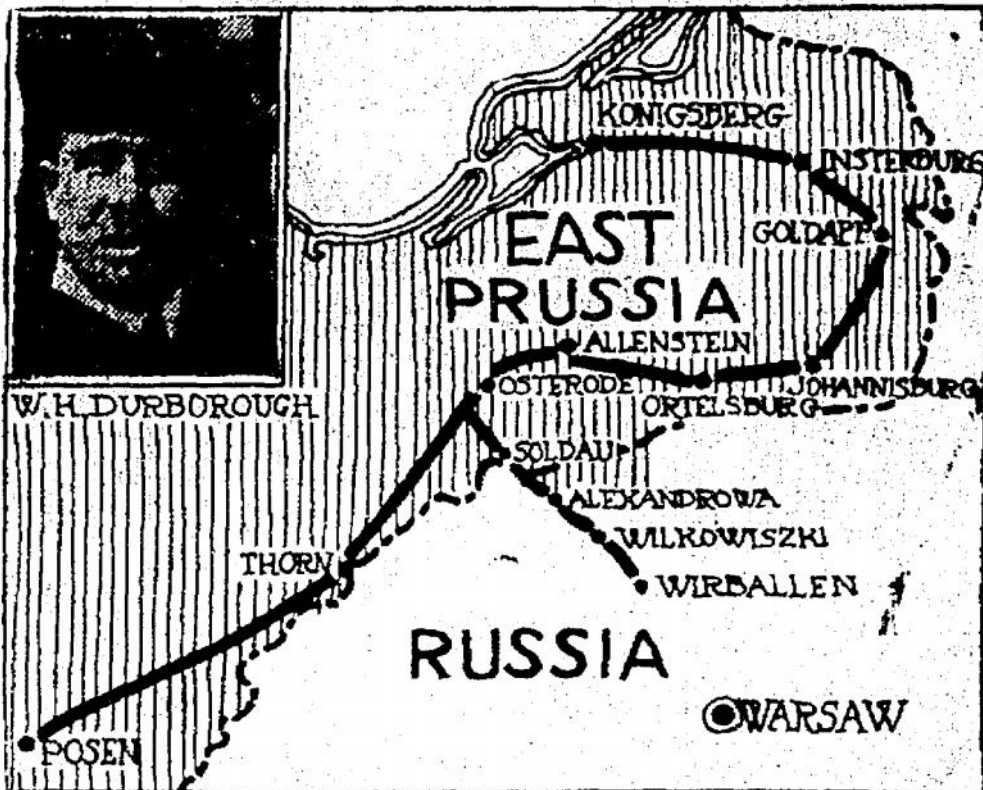
Our next stop at “K” was at the “Entlausungsanstalt” [delousing station, RvD]. This is an impressive, large wooden building that had cost a million [guilders] and could accommodate 12,000 men on a daily basis. We later saw a similar building at Alexandrowo that was being used. I intent to write more on these delousing stations later on when I have to chance to do so.

We crossed the German border which is heavily guarded and drove through Eydtkuhnen, a town that was completely destroyed as early as in October [1914]. After leaving this place, I noticed that we travelled on familiar roads. Here not much has changed since October last year, apart from the fact that the cities of Stallupönen and Gumbinnen had more damage at that time. But the main difference was: the people living in these cities had returned and the towns looked very lively again.

It had become very late at night and took us quite some time before we saw some lights again. This was when we reached Insterburg. How safe this town is now, so far away located from the front. It’s hard to remember that at the start of the war Insterburg had been General Headquarters for the Russian Army.

Here at the Eastern Front, people have all the reasons to speak about a “mobile war”!

# Durborough With Big German Drive at Russia



Heavy line shows route taken by N. E. A. Staff Photographer Durborough in his latest camera campaign in the eastern war zone.

**Durborough, who went to Germany in the spring to take pictures for the Newspaper Enterprise association, IS WITH THE GERMANS IN THEIR GREAT DRIVE against Russia from East Prussia.**

A batch of films has just arrived from him showing scenes behind the firing line of General von Hindenburg and of General von Buelow, who is pushing down into Russia with the greatest army of cavalry ever gotten together. Durborough's journey by automobile started at Posen in Germany and his motor carried him northeasterly through East Prussia to Königsberg, through the famous Manzurian lakes district and down into Russia itself.

THE TELEGRAM will print Durborough's most interesting pictures from day to day.

